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Pennsylvania **ANGLER**

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Straight Talk

The Time Has Come



Edward R. Miller, P.E.

Executive Director

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

For nearly 127 years, the Commission has acquired or developed facilities throughout Pennsylvania to carry out its mission to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources. Whenever possible, the agency has created support facilities at several locations to meet program needs and house required support personnel. With the exception of one area maintenance facility, two area fisheries management offices, and two regional law enforcement offices, all Commission field staff members are situated at Commission-owned facilities. Three of these buildings are owned by other public agencies and rental costs are nearly nil. Waterways conservation officers, although based in their homes, spend the great majority of their time in the field, and report to the regional offices.

The Commission has always operated on a business basis because it must function within the funds generated by its customers, the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania. It has found, as most private business owners and homeowners have learned, that it is wiser over the long term to own your own facility than it is to pay rent. The Commission has been successful in avoiding costly rentals at most field locations, but it has not been able to capture the cost advantages of ownership at its Harrisburg headquarters, where approximately 80 employees are assigned to three different leased buildings, located within a three-mile radius.

Many other state agencies headquartered in the state capital, including the Turnpike Commission, Department of Agriculture, Game Commission, State Police, Historical and Museum Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Resources and others, have already developed their own headquarters facilities. These efforts now result in public cost savings throughout the useful life of these facilities, while providing safe, attractive, efficient and pleasant conditions for employees and the public.

Today, construction and financing costs are the most favorable in recent history. Thus, in January 1992, the Commission authorized the staff to explore the feasibility of developing a headquarters facility on Commission-controlled land located in Susquehanna Township, Dauphin County. The property, a 35-acre tract located near the Game Commission and State Police headquarters, is ideal for the Commission's needs. In addition to offering adequate lands for an office facility for Harrisburg-area staff, necessary warehousing space and area maintenance staff, it contains unique topography, woodlands, wetlands and a spring-fed stream, which provide excellent opportunities to create a public fishing and boating skills training and education center. An aquatic resource education center at this location would serve the large southcentral Pennsylvania population and the many visitors to the state capital. It would be a major contribution to the Commission's efforts to expand aquatic resource education and boating safety education to the public.

The staff responded to the Commission's charge by preparing cost estimates and by exploring methods of developing these facilities. Legislative support was needed to authorize the expenditure of Fish and Boat funds for development, and many hours of hard work were required to position this authorization request for legislative action. Amendment of Senate Bill 1642 to include this authority was accomplished in November 1992, and the legislation was approved by the General Assembly on November 25, 1992.

On December 28, 1992, Governor Robert P. Casey signed Senate Bill 1642 into law as Act 1992-188, which included authorization for the Commission to construct a new administration headquarters, education/information center and related facilities on Commission lands along Elmerton Avenue in Susquehanna Township.

The Commission and its supporters are grateful to Governor Robert P. Casey and the members of the General Assembly for their backing of this important project.

The stage is now set to move ahead to project design, while various funding alternatives are studied. Every effort will be made to move as quickly as possible so that project costs can be kept to a minimum.

The Commission undertakes this project with strong support from the Pennsylvania General Assembly and from Pennsylvania anglers and boaters. The Commission will do its best to move this project to fruition. The Commission's goal is to create a facility that symbolizes the mission of the Commission and will serve as a credit to the Commonwealth. It's a project that is long overdue, and its time has come. Your continued support is essential if we are to succeed.

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Pennsylvania ANGLER

The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

February 1993 Vol. 62 No. 2

Graphite or Fiberglass—Which Rod Helps You Catch More Bass?

by Andy Cline

The answer to this question may surprise you. It'll also give you some useful hints on choosing rods.....4

The "Best" Trout Fishing Conditions by Mark A. Nale

Five trout fishing experts offer their formulas for success.....6

Two Campgrounds, Three Streams and a Lake by Marge Wonderlich

Centre County's Poe Valley and Poe Paddy State parks offer several different kinds of lake and stream trout fishing.....8

Art Flick's Gray Fox Variant by Chauncy K. Lively

This pattern was originally intended only to suggest the Green Drake mayfly, not imitate it exactly. The fly's success let it become a standard Green Drake pattern.....12

Popper Perfection by Art Michaels

Fishing with cork poppers provides splashy strikes, fast action and lively battles. Follow these basic ideas for making and fishing these productive lures.....14

Opening Day in the Allegheny National Forest by Robert L. Petri

The Allegheny National Forest encompasses more than a half-million acres in Warren, Forest, Elk and McKean counties. It also has some 40 stocked streams and two stocked lakes, and there are nearly 100 small, unstocked streams that contain wild brook trout. The Forest is a terrific opening day choice.....16

The Spell of Winter Trout by David A. Wonderlich

Stream trout fishing in winter is a special challenge, but the rewards are great—beautifully colored fish that have become the wary, streetwise survivors of the previous trout season. In this article the author shows you exactly how to succeed.....20

Gearing Up for Fly Fishing by Jeff Mulhollem

Fly fishing takes a lot of preparation. Use these ideas to get ready for the trout season.....23

On the Water with Dave Wolf

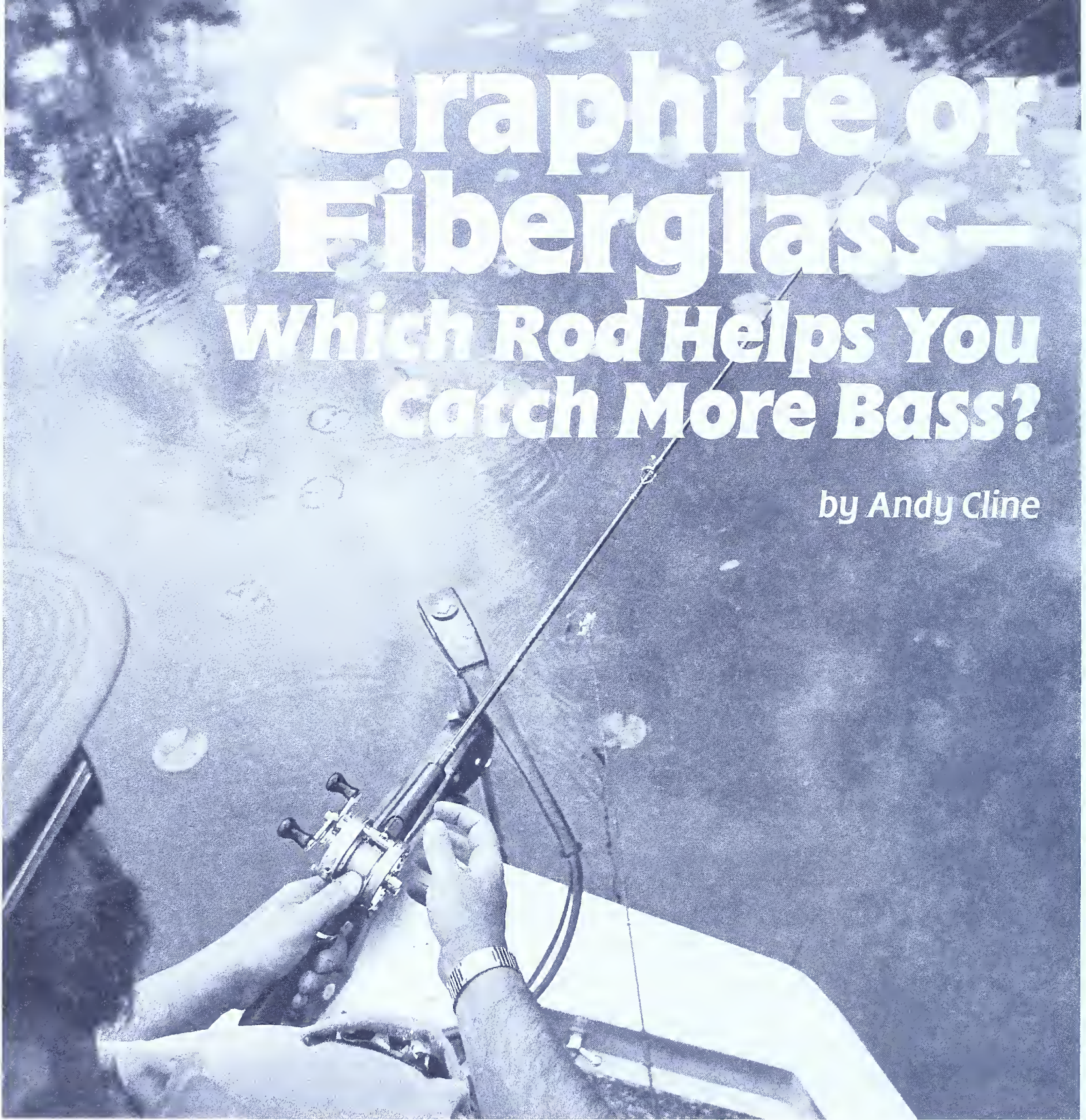
Impatience.....31

The cover

This issue's front-cover rainbow trout was photographed by Doug Stamm. If you're getting ready for opening day and the trout season, this issue is a good place to start. Five expert trout fishermen reveal their success secrets in the article on page 6, and on page 23 you'll find a wealth of ideas on what tackle and equipment you need. Two Pennsylvania areas with good trout fishing are featured in the articles beginning on pages 8 and 16, and on page 20 you can brush up on how to catch trout right now—if you can't wait for opening day. Bass anglers will want to peruse the ideas in selecting rods, starting on page 4. For a look at what Pennsylvania anglers are catching, look over the "Cast & Caught" pictures in this issue's "Currents" section, beginning on page 26. Experienced fly tiers will want to follow the step-by-step tying instructions for the productive pattern on page 12, and if you're new to fly fishing and fly tying, check out the article about poppers on page 14. Lastly, would you like this season's Inseason Trout Stocking Schedule for free? Please see this issue's back cover.

Graphite or Fiberglass—Which Rod Helps You Catch More Bass?

by Andy Cline



Imagine two casting rods of equal length and action—one is made of graphite and the other is made of fiberglass. From this scanty information can you tell which rod will help you catch more bass?

Don't be too quick to answer. Anglers ask a lot from the synthetic wisp we call a fishing rod. It must load easily and sling a bait to a desired target. It must transmit the feel of a lure and the strike of a fish. It must withstand the shock of a hook set. It must bend at will as the angler tugs on one end and the fish struggles on the other. It must do these things repeatedly throughout the fishing day and for days yet to come.

To ask which handles these jobs better—

graphite or fiberglass—is to create a false dichotomy. Each material, in the hands of experts who understand its characteristics, can catch fish. But the material that helps you catch more fish just may be a combination of the two.

Fiberglass is old technology. But like many old things, it enjoys the hallowed position of age. It is the venerable old gentleman of fishing rods. But along comes graphite—a light, sleek and sensitive maiden—to woo anglers away.

"You can make a stronger rod with fiberglass than you can with graphite," says Brad Benit, director of engineering, research and development for Berkley. "It's more

durable and forgiving. Graphite basically makes a rod lighter. It reacts quicker and stores more energy.

"When fishing, these distinct properties play a crucial role in catching fish—and they also should play a crucial role in how you choose a rod. The advent of graphite and its proliferation in the rod-building world has created an assumption of superiority. But this assumption may be false, depending on the circumstances. Graphite is a stiff material and fiberglass is flexible. It's easy to make a rod with all the action of a pool cue with graphite.

"The stiffer the material you use the weaker the rod," Benit says. With fiber-

glass, you can't escape the flex. But in situations where flex is important, graphite falls short of fiberglass.

"You can't get graphite rods flexible enough for fishing crankbaits or jerkbaits," says professional angler Tommy Martin. Although Martin says graphite is more responsive than fiberglass, sometimes this responsiveness is a detriment.

"A graphite rod responds and pulls back when a fish strikes a crankbait or topwater bait. You don't want anything pulling the lure away from the fish," Martin says. Martin believes he gets fewer hook-ups with graphite rods when fishing these moving baits.

Professional bass angler Gary Klein prefers fiberglass over graphite because "fiberglass lands fish. When you have a bass to the boat, fiberglass beats graphite."

Klein believes that in those crucial moments when a bass is fighting near the boat, fiberglass rods are better able to control the fish. The flex in fiberglass acts as a shock absorber to keep the fish hooked and the rod in one piece.

But not all is glory with fiberglass. Martin finds these rods "heavy and cumbersome," and so they are. Fishing all day with a 100 percent fiberglass rod is an exercise in masochism, especially for women. Your shoulders and elbows pay a price for the durable and forgiving nature of fiberglass. In situations where sensitivity is important, fiberglass is out-classed by graphite.

"Weight is the overwhelming factor in sensitivity," Benit says. "The lighter the material is for the same action, the more sensitive the rod.

"The graphite used to make most of today's premium rods is half as dense as E-Glass, the material used for most of today's premium fiberglass rods. This lightness, combined with stiffness, makes a rod that delivers the lightest tap to the angler's fingers. With this sensitivity comes control—when you can feel the bait and feel the fish, you have a greater chance at catching them when fishing baits that require a sensitive touch.

"Sensitivity plays a great part in knowing when a bass takes a worm," says fishing columnist Homer Circle. "Other materials absorb vibration; graphite transmits vibration.

"Professional bass angler Penny Berryman rates sensitivity as her number one priority in rods, with strength and a flexible tip ranking second and third. "Being a woman and making—how many casts per day, maybe thousands—I want a rod to be light and sensitive," Berryman says.

Her choice is IM-6 graphite. Berryman gets around graphite's stiffness by using



lighter actions. "I'm not using a broomstick," she says. "I'm using the lighter rods—medium actions. These rods have plenty of flex. "Most graphite rods made today have a modulus rating (the measure of stiffness in graphite) between 30 million and 40 million PSI. According to Benit, ratings higher than these create a rod too expensive and stiff to use. Rods marked "high modulus" are actually intermediate modulus—the high rating sounds better to the consumer, or the intermediate rating is hidden cryptically, like the rating "IM-6."

IM-6 rods have a modulus rating between 35 million and 40 million PSI. The differences in stiffness among various rods are caused by the action of the blank—light actions are more slender and flexible, and heavy actions are thicker and stiffer. Thus, Berryman compensates for the graphites' stiffness, while retaining sensitivity, by using lighter actions.

"Normally, most people prefer graphite for feel and lightness," says Doug Hannon. He prefers a set of medium-heavy-action IM-6 graphite rods that he says are "stiff enough to set the hook when fishing a worm and soft enough for crankbaits."

But even though graphite is the answer

for some, others who make their living putting fish in the boat are discovering, or rather rediscovering, a third material—the fiberglass/graphite composite. "It offers anglers the best of both worlds," Benit says. You can buy composite rods in a bewildering array of combinations from mostly fiberglass to mostly graphite and everything in between.

Benit believes the best combination is the 50-50 mix. This creates a rod, action for action, lighter than fiberglass and stronger than graphite. It may not be as sensitive as graphite or as strong as fiberglass, but it's close enough for most anglers. And it's close enough for many pros.

"I've gone strictly to them," Martin says of his cranking rods. For the balance of his rods, Martin prefers IM-6 graphite.

Does one material really catch more bass? Not really. But even though anglers like Berryman believe there is nothing wrong with fiberglass, their jobs demand both the sensitivity and strength that come from rods made with IM-6 or a graphite/fiberglass composite.



The “Best” *Trout Fishing Conditions* by Mark A. Nale

Trout fishing success has many variables—water color and temperature, weather, month, time of day, insect activity, angling pressure and stream level. Most anglers know that any one of these could make or break a day on the stream.

Which stream conditions would you like when you slip on your hip waders? If you had only one day to fish this year and you could pick the weather and stream conditions, which ones would you select?

I picked the brains of several experts who use various fishing methods. The people selected are experts—anglers capable of catching 50 or more trout in one day: Kurt Siemon fishes streamers and nymphs, Doug Rohrer uses small crankbaits and spinners, Joe Kohler specializes in dry flies, Darryle Dively uses bait and spinner-flies, and Bob Petri carries both a spinning outfit and a fly rod everywhere he goes.

Each of these anglers certainly falls in to the 10 percent who catch 90 percent of the trout. To help fading memories, they all keep a written record of their fishing. Joe Kohler and Doug Rohrer take extensive notes. The results of my questions were surprising and should be valuable to any serious trout angler. Slip into your waders and join these anglers on the stream.

Kurt Siemon

When I met Kurt Siemon along Spring Creek last October, he was smiling. “The fishing’s great!” He beamed. He had driven all the way to State College from Virginia to revisit some of the good trout fishing that he had experienced while attending Penn State University. Although it was only 10 a.m., Kurt had caught and released a 19-incher and six smaller trout. He excitedly told me about the trout he caught as well as the big rainbow that had broken his tippet and the two other large trout that had slipped the hook. In the next half-hour, Kurt landed an 18-incher and a small brown, while I scored zero.

Kurt says, “Fishing is best when the water is just a little dirty. It decreases the trout’s visibility and lets me use a heavier line with my nymphs and streamers. I can still catch trout even when the water is high and looks like chocolate milk,” he says.

In clearer water, Kurt’s preferred method of trout fishing is actually more like hunting. He looks for trout, particularly big ones, and then casts a Zonker or Woolly Bugger to those fish. That’s what he was doing so successfully when we met.

The ideal weather for Kurt is cloudy and rainy, or to put it in his words, “Bad weather is good!” There are fewer people on the stream and the trout are less wary.” Sunny days with low, clear water are his worst.

Doug Rohrer

Doug Rohrer, president of the Neshannock Chapter of Trout Unlimited, is good at another type of angling—artificial lures.

He splits his trout fishing time about 50-50 between small Rapalas and spinners. Aside from a few trips each year to his favorite stream, the Little Juniata River, Doug usually casts his lures in streams around his home near the Pennsylvania-Ohio border.

Even though his fishing time is limited, Doug manages to catch a few hundred trout a year. According to Doug, the best conditions for his type of trout fishing are a sunny day with the stream flow “slightly up and tea-colored.”

Doug found those conditions on his home water, Cool Spring, one day last spring. In just five hours he landed 68 wild brown trout while using a spinner.

Doug’s favorite months are May and June, and he prefers the morning because he can fish over undisturbed trout.

Joe Kohler

On the other end of Pennsylvania, in Allentown, lives Joe Kohler, a dry fly specialist and former president of the Little Lehigh Chapter of TU. For most dry fly anglers, the magical time to be astream is from one hour before sunset to one hour after sunset, and Joe is no exception. On a good evening Joe lands about a dozen trout. His best day ever occurred on Young Woman’s Creek when his flies attracted over 50 fish. Joe averages 500 or more trout a year. In 1991 he caught 554—all on dry flies.

I kept asking Joe about stream conditions and he kept talking about hatches. “Give me a green drake hatch that lasts for 24 hours!” Joe answers with a laugh. “That would be the ultimate.” Knowing that wish to be outside the realm of nature, Joe outlined the factors (including a heavy hatch, of course) that would make a banner evening for him.

“The day would be cloudy and I’d pick a section of limestone stream that is darkened even more by lots of trees. Those two conditions would cause the hatch to start earlier,” he says. Joe likes the stream to be devoid of other anglers and to carry a low to normal flow. “A high flow overfeeds the trout and makes them harder to catch,” he says. Joe wants his stream thermometer to register 55 to 60 degrees and the water to be a “limestone green.”

Darryle Dively

Darryle Dively lives in the southcentral part of the state. Because of his other outdoor interests, trout fishing for Darryle is primarily an April-May activity. During that six- or seven-week period, Darryle lands 200 to 300 legal-sized trout. His quarry is usually stocked trout, but he occasionally takes a few side trips for wild brook trout. On his best opening day, Darryle caught and released 65 stocked trout. Each season Darryle has several days during which he lands 30 or more trout.

Darryle’s strategy is to work slowly upstream, alternating pink-colored shrimp salmon eggs with size 1 gold spinner-flies. (These flies go by the brand names of Joe’s Flies or Jerry’s Flies.) If

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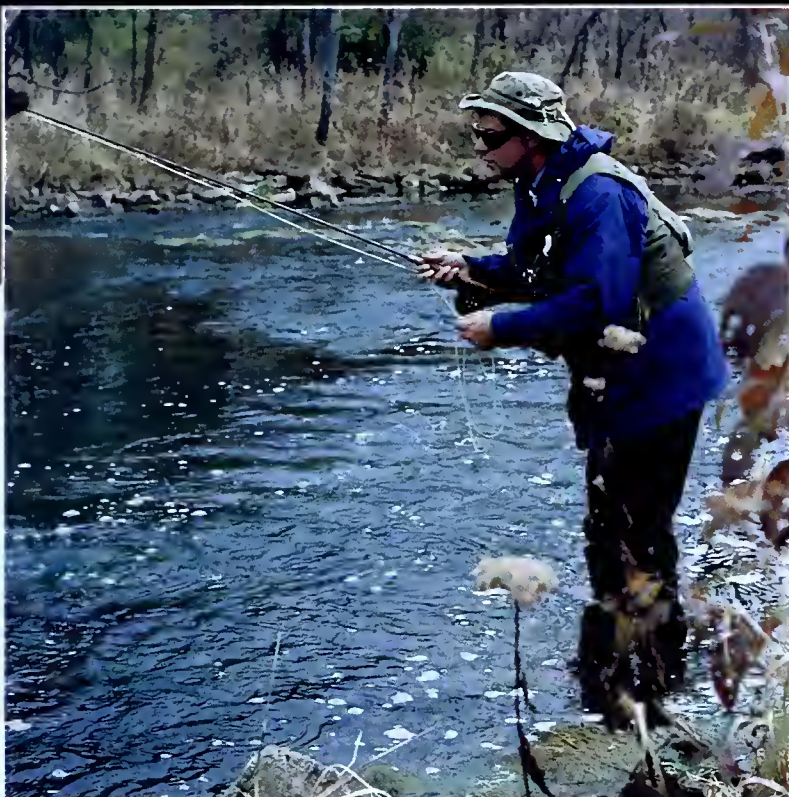
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Each expert believes the fishing is best when the streams have at least a little color.



photos: Mark A. Nade

eggs outproduce spinners, or vice versa, he stays with that bait or lure, but otherwise he keeps switching his offering at each new spot.

"You'd be surprised how many trout I miss on a spinner and then catch with the shrimp eggs," Darryle says.

If conditions are right, Darryle's best day of the season is usually opening day. "I like a water temperature between 55 and 60 degrees, with the level a little on the high side. The stream should be neither clear nor muddy. The water should have just enough color so that I can't see the bottom," he says. He calls it "green." "If the water is more colored, spinner fishing will be off and salmon eggs will be more productive," Darryle says.

The weather doesn't make that much of a difference to Darryle, except as it affects stream conditions. He prefers mornings over afternoons and he says that the worst fishing is on a low, clear, cold stream.

Darryle's favorite early season trout streams are the Allegheny River, the First Fork of Sinnemahoning Creek, and Freeman Run—all in Potter County.

Bob Petri

Bob Petri, outdoor writer and editor of *Pennsylvania Trout*, fishes both dry flies and spinners, taking advantage of what he believes are the best conditions for each. He often fishes the colder morning water with spinners and then pulls the long rod out of his car and fishes floating flies late in the afternoon and evening. He knows



what he's doing, too! Each year he lands several thousand Pennsylvania trout. On his best day he caught 81 brook and brown trout.

Bob likes water temperatures in the 55- to 65-degree range for dry flies. He's had good days with free-rising fish on water as cold as 46 degrees. "A water temperature of 71 degrees is about the upper limits for good fly fishing," Bob says. "A rapid drop in temperature is the worst." Unlike a more traditional Joe Kohler, Bob likes the stream level to be up even for dry fly fishing.

For spinfishing, Bob favors the higher water levels, but now he'd like the water "slightly off color." Although he prefers high levels, he'd rather fish dropping water than rising water. Bob has experienced great spinfishing with water temperatures anywhere in the 45- to 65-degree range. High water is best when it is on the warm side of his preferred range. With cold, high water, Bob often finds that the trout are "reluctant to move from the bottom and when they do move, they only give spinners a half-hearted slap." If there is much insect activity on the surface, spinfishing is usually poor "and it's time for me to get out the fly rod," Bob says.

Bob says that the weather for both types of fishing should be "cloudy, overcast, or light rain, as long as the water temperature hasn't dropped. Bright sun? I'd rather sit home and knit," Bob says.

For more detailed information on how Bob scores, read his article, "Two-Way Trout" in the September 1992 *Angler*.

These experienced trout anglers have their preferences. Each believes that the fishing is best when the streams have at least a little color. Joe prefers the clearest water for his dry fly fishing. All of the anglers except Joe like the stream level to be a little on the high side, and Bob favors the highest flows. Four of the six think that they catch more trout on an overcast day. The nymph and lure anglers even prefer a little rain. Doug breaks from the pack and actually favors sunny days. Darryle had no preference.

Of the anglers who carry a thermometer, two mentioned 55- to 65-degrees as the best water temperatures. Bob's temperature range is a little wider: 45 to 65 degrees for spinners and 55 to 65 degrees for dry flies. Several experts mentioned the importance of fishing over undisturbed trout. With wild trout this is a must, but it can also be an important variable that anglers overlook when casting for stocked trout.





TWO Campgrounds, THREE Streams and A Lake

by Marge Wonderlich

With the camper up and all the gear in place, my husband David and I went outside to catch what activity we could in the waning evening light. Two young boys were walking by, each with a big smile and a death grip on his own stringer sporting a few nice trout. Our daughters Elizabeth and Jennifer, both 10, grabbed their spinning outfits and worms and headed for Poe Lake, which was no more than 100 yards from our door (that was the direction the boys with the fish came from). Our sons David, 15, and John, 13, were quickly in their hip boots with fly rods in hand, sneaking along Big Poe Creek below Poe Dam. David and I, after a day that had already been long, decided to get the fire going and let the kids get the first taste of the fishing.

We were camped in 620-acre Poe Valley State Park (78 campsites), which itself sits amid Bald Eagle State Forest's 198,000 acres. Four miles downstream, where Big Poe Creek joins Penns Creek, Poe Paddy State Park (43 sites) completes the sister campground setting, in which you can experience a varied and exciting menu of Pennsylvania trout fishing.

Big Poe Creek, and its unstocked sister, Little Poe, run through hardwood and hemlock forests well above the park before Big Poe slows and widens into 25-acre Poe Lake, the center of recreation at the park. Big Poe begins again below the dam. Little Poe flows in the mountains south of the lake, and each stream meanders three more miles through dark woods until they meet and join Penns Creek at Poe Paddy State Park.

It is all there for the trout fisherman—walk-in fishing on the small headwaters of Big Poe; walk-in to explore for small natives on Little Poe; lake fishing from unpowered boats or canoes and shore fishing on Poe Lake; easy access fishing for stocked brown and brook trout on lower Big Poe; and fishing Penns Creek, a world famous stream that can please as well as challenge even the most ardent trout angler.

Little Poe Creek

Little Poe Creek above its confluence with Big Poe should be looked at with an eye toward exploration. In dry summers, sections of the stream dry up or are underground while the rest of the creek still carries water. This is a very small stream with small, wild brook trout. The creek is managed under the wild trout classification. This gives an angler the best chance for catching a Pennsylvania native early in the season when the water is higher and the trout less spooky. Red worms are a favorite bait of the small, native trout and stream fishermen. Anglers score well with red worms in spring on this brushy mountain brook.

Upper Big Poe

Upper Big Poe is much like the larger water of Little Poe—wild brook trout along with a few browns, small water, unstocked, brushy, and a challenge for the wild trout fisherman who isn't looking for large sizes or great numbers.

Early season is a prime time for the best chances of connecting with a few trout, and

the action picks back up in the fall. Also, when the lake starts warming during the summer, trout either go deeper in the lake or they run up the inlet of Big Poe Creek. Summertime fishing in or around Big Poe inlet, especially after a rain, can provide some surprising action. Fishing Big Poe above the lake requires more patience than on a larger creek if you want to use fly equipment.

The best place to start is at the park office for a detailed map of the area and a few tips on water conditions and news of trout activity.

Poe Lake

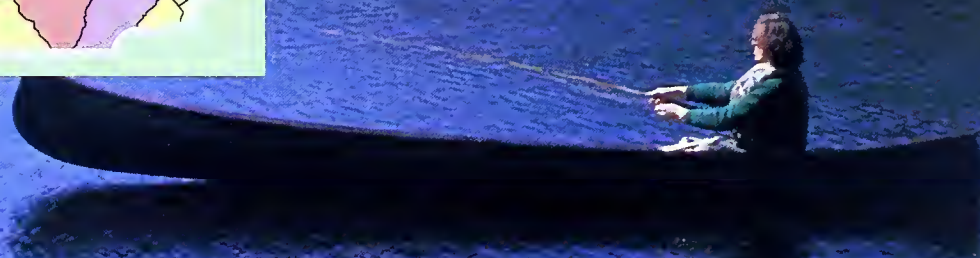
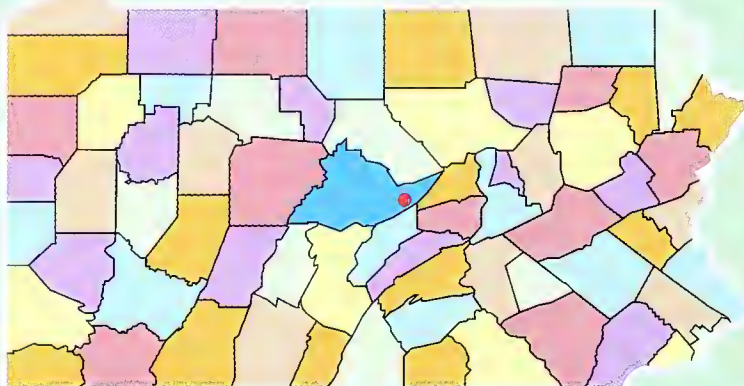
Poe Lake is the center of activity of Poe Valley State Park, and it is also the focal point for the still-water angler. The lake is cold, it does not have a lot of insect life, and it is able to maintain trout year-round. The lake is managed for trout fishing although it contains small numbers of crappies, sunfish, bullheads, perch and chain pickerel. Throughout the spring of each year about 5,200 brook and 3,400 rainbows are stocked in the lake, in addition to the fall stocking of rainbows in preparation for the winter season.

The small lake is very user-friendly. It is fished mainly with bait such as minnows, worms (red, wax and meal) and salmon eggs, as well as with spinners and other minnow look-alikes. A hot item at the lake that has accounted for a large percentage of the trout caught is commercially prepared scented bait. Pinch off a small amount and put it on your hook as you would a small doughball, and fish it just off the bottom with a sinker. The bait floats up the length of the leader. When you feel the hit you set the hook as if you were using salmon eggs. It is a popular product at the lake and fishermen believe the scent has a lot to do with its success in attracting trout.

Because there is little fly activity in the lake, almost no one fly fishes on the impoundment. That is what I like to hear before getting the fly rod out. Trout that aren't



Poe Valley State Park—located in Centre County



caught and have close calls with a hook learn quickly that a hook bites. When you can find an impoundment, such as Poe Lake, where flies are not used, you can be the angler to educate the trout.

A waterway does not have to be rich in aquatic insects to have trout take insects from the surface. There are numbers of land-based insects and shallow-water inhabitants that are taken by trout in the deeper water. Also, a trout's natural instinct is to consume an easy meal. Nothing is easier than an ant, mosquito, spider or traditional fly (Quill Gordon, Adams, Light Cahill) lying helpless on the surface. Just keep your eye on the fly. The moment you turn away is when the trout usually hit.

Also try two wet flies, one on the end of a 4x leader and the other on a 3x dropper 18 inches above the first. Cast the flies, allow them to sink (try one splitshot between them if you don't have a sinking line), and retrieve them hand over hand, changing speeds with different casts at different depths until you find the right combination. On a lake like Poe, you are almost always the only one using this method and it usually isn't long before you hook your first trout.

The area of the dam is the hotspot of the lake with anglers hooking up with fish both from boats and from the breast of the dam. It is a perfect spot for parents to help their young children catch trout while only a short distance from their camp below the dam. If you want to use a boat but don't have one, there is a boat rental station near the beach along the south side of the lake.

The lake is most productive in the spring

Because Poe Lake (above) has little fly activity, few anglers try flies there. Nevertheless, fish go after an easy meal. When you find an impoundment like Poe Lake, where flies aren't used, you can be the angler who educates the trout.

and early part of the summer before the water warms and fish go deeper. The action again picks up in the fall when surface waters cool. The lake is also restocked in November.

In winter, ice fishermen take to the lake. Along with the ice augers and tip-ups, some families bring ice skates to pass the time on the lake between catches, and sleds or toboggans that are used on the 100-yard slope of the campground road.

Big Poe below the campground is divided into two sections—the first, from the dam outlet approximately three miles downstream to its confluence with Little Poe; the second, from the juncture of the two Poes downstream, approximately one mile, to its union with Penns Creek.

Big Poe Creek

From the dam to its meeting with its little sister, Big Poe is stocked with about 1,000 brook trout and 800 brown trout. This is a small forest stream with nice pools that meander around hemlocks and slide over moss-covered rocks. It is dark next to the stream even in the summer, and among its pockets of deeper hiding places, small numbers of wild trout call the stretch home in all four seasons.

From the dam to its confluence with Little Poe and finally to Penns Creek, the stream is easily accessible from Big Poe Road, which parallels the creek. As you drive

along, you are tantalized by the small, seemingly hidden sun-dappled pools so characteristic of Pennsylvania's brookie streams. You don't have to walk to get to this one. Just pull over in a wider area and enjoy the fishing.

The second area of Poe Creek below the dam begins with its union with Little Poe Creek and is stocked with about 800 brook trout and 500 brown trout. A stream survey by the Fish and Boat Commission found the stretch to contain both wild brown trout and brook trout. This is still small-stream fishing, and the waterway is protected by trees, brush and laurel. It has easy Poe Road access, and looks as wild as if it ran through a deep wilderness—and actually it does. The areas of Poe Valley and Poe Paddy lie in rugged wilderness, and its streams have the same character.

I used my favorite size 16 Light Cahill pattern along with an Adams for trout that refused the light-colored fly. On the small stream, the trout are much less fussy because they get only a short time to take the offering before it is gone in the current. Whether using worms, eggs, minnows or flies, the keys to success include a quiet approach and careful presentation so the offering naturally drifts to the trout. If you don't wade or walk the bank quietly, the trout will be spooked before you get to cast—this is even more critical as the season progresses and the water becomes smoother.

Penns Creek

Big Poe, in its final yards, babbles through little Poe Paddy Park, then adds its water to fabled Penns Creek. Penns is a large trout stream by Pennsylvania standards. It is a limestone creek with an alkaline pH that is little affected by acid rain, it has a great trout population, it has some large trout, and it has great quantities of flies such as the renowned green drake hatch.

There is a bench and a pool behind the campsite where Poe enters Penns. Long hardwood boughs overhang the water, and the surface is broken here and there where boulders rise up from the bottom—perfect to sit and watch big browns sip insects from the surface. It is a great spot for appreciating what we have in Pennsylvania.

Penns Creek from Spring Mills to Poe Paddy is home to a good population of wild brown trout and is stocked with some 4,700 browns and 4,700 rainbows. Poe Paddy to Cherry Run has an exceptional population of brown trout. It is not stocked, and it is managed for catch and release.

Downstream, from Cherry Run to Glen Iron, there are a few wild trout, and the creek is stocked with some 5,500 brown trout and 5,500 rainbow trout.

Hip boots are fine for wading Big Poe, but waders are a must if you plan on entering Penns. It is a good idea to have felt soles on your boots because the rocks can be slippery. Some people who fish the big stream also use a wading staff to help them around the unsure footing that can occur where there are large rocks rising abruptly from the bottom.

For fishing Penns, I prefer my nine-foot graphite rod for a 6-weight line. Unless it is early in the spring, I use nine-foot to 12-foot leaders, tapered to as fine as I am forced to go.

Penns Creek has the reputation of providing either feast or famine. Early season success on freshly stocked trout is typical with lures and bait on the unrestricted water. The key to Penns seems to center around picking a part of the stream to fish (maybe a pocket between two rocks, or a small run along a steep bank) instead of wholesale casting across a large pool. The same is true of fly fishing. Pick the most likely feeding positions and cast to those spots as if they were small creeks. Don't let the size of the stream intimidate you.

A general rule for fishing flies on Penns: If you match the hatch and don't get a take, try the same fly one or two sizes smaller, and if the water is smooth, try a smaller-diameter leader as well. If you are not having success during the late-spring green drake

The key to success on Penns Creek is matching the size of the fly and approximate color to the natural, and then presenting the fly as naturally as possible.

hatch, try fishing just at dark and after with a large yellow stone fly pattern. The hatches occur at the same time and the trout, at times, take the stone after dark rather than the drake.

Another tip: If they won't take the flies dry, sink one and work it just beneath the surface as an emerger. This tactic works especially well on Penns Creek.

There has been a lot written about fly fishing Penns Creek, and it may seem intimidating. Don't forget what you've read, but don't worry about the necessity to match the hatch perfectly, either. I use the darker quill patterns early, following with brown, gray, rust, green and buff-shade patterns. The old Quill Gordon, Hendrickson, Red Quill, Blue Quill, Adams, brown and slate and green drakes, light and buff Cahill, dark stone, and caddises in buff, yellow, green, and gray give me a selection that works year-round on Penns Creek—and year-round on most other Pennsylvania trout streams as well.

The important key is matching the size of the fly and approximate color to the natural, and then presenting the fly as naturally as possible, so the trout is still interested. For the angler willing to alter his technique to the whims of the trout, few streams anywhere have as much to offer as Penns Creek.

The girls got back to camp first with stories of the one that got away, and a request... "tomorrow we want to use fly rods because there were rings on the water just out from shore." The boys arrived in time to see the girls putting their first mountain pies over the golden embers. They had fishing tales also—big trout lying in small, clear pools; leaders that were too thick and too short; and trout that disappeared quickly when spooked.

During the next few days we added one story after another of broken leaders, of the old railroad tunnel running through Paddy Mountain leading to the incredibly beautiful catch-and-release area, of fish caught, and of the promise for the future made by the many trout seen but not caught.

For the kids, their Poe Valley/Poe Paddy adventure began that first evening, and will probably last a lifetime. They enjoy the things my husband and I like—good fishing where we can camp and explore in a beautiful wilderness setting; where each individual can enjoy himself at his own level; and the whole family can come together with the days' tales and a sense of appreciation and fulfillment. Poe Valley and Poe Paddy are two parks where that is definitely possible.

Angler

Poe Profiles

• **Location.** To reach Poe Valley State Park from Millheim, take Route 45 west for 1.5 miles. Then follow the signs to the park (12 more miles). From Potters Mills, take US Route 322 east for 1.5 miles to the top of Seven Mountains Scenic Area. Then follow the marked state forest roads to the park (10 more miles). All roads leading to the park are gravel, although they turn to pavement near the park entrance.

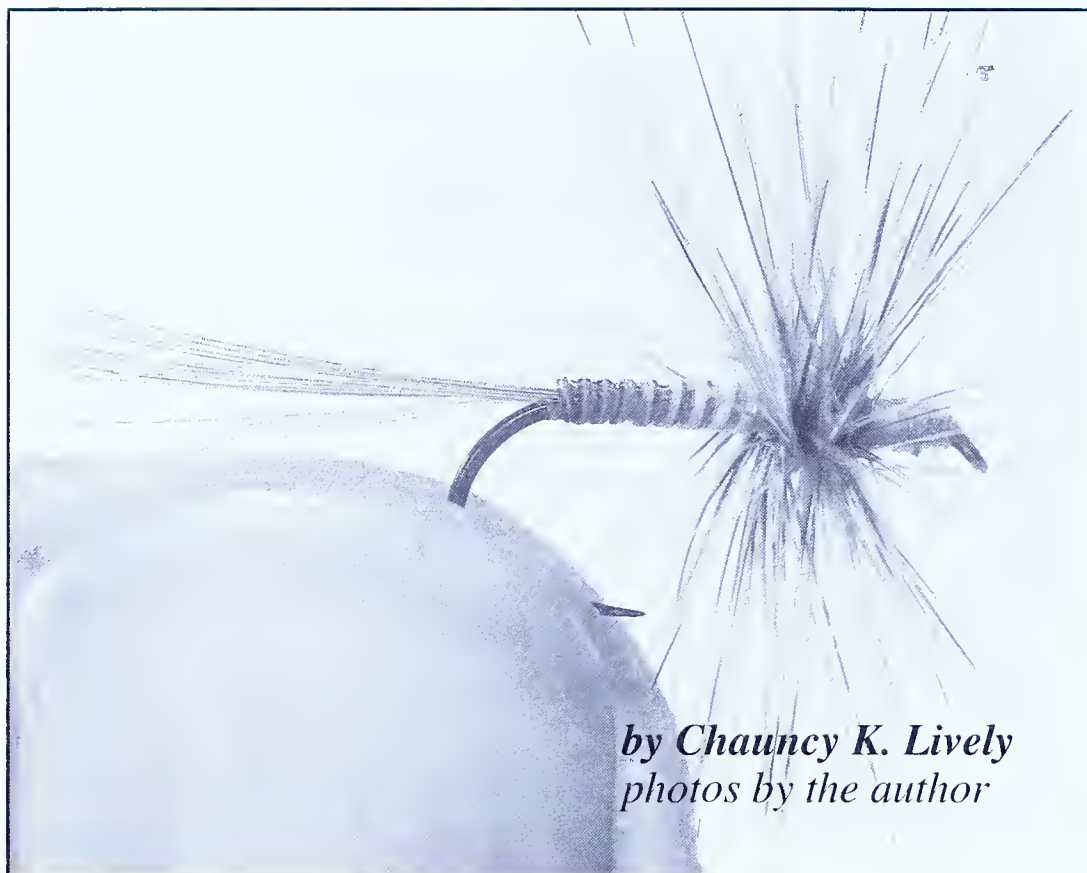
Poe Paddy State Park can be reached by traveling east from Poe Valley State Park four miles on Big Poe Road.

• **Facilities.** Poe Valley has a sand beach with lifeguards and is typically open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Guided walks, amphitheater programs, and special activities occur throughout the summer season. Hiking is a favorite pastime in the area. The Mid-State Trail passes through the park and is the trail taken to get through the railroad tunnel at Paddy Mountain to reach the Penns Creek catch-and-release area. A concession stand provides small rental craft during the season. It also carries useful camping items for sale, such as charcoal, kerosene and ice.

Poe Paddy State Park is self-contained with Penns Creek, the major draw rather than Poe Lake. Some campers staying at "Paddy" do travel to the Poe Valley campground to swim or use the food concession.

• **More information.** For more information about either park, contact: Department of Environmental Resources, Poe Valley State Park, c/o Reeds Gap State Park, RD 1, Box 276-A, Milroy, PA 17063-9735. Phone (814) 349-8778, or (717) 667-3622.—MW.

Art Flick's Gray Fox Variant



by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author

The West Kill Tavern was once a favorite watering hole for many Catskill trout anglers. It was a gathering place where they could compare notes about their successes or failures and either celebrate or drown their sorrows, depending on the luck of the day. But the principal attraction of the tavern was its proprietor, Art Flick, himself an affable story-teller and an avid flyfisherman with an intimate knowledge of all the trout streams in the area. He not only knew which flies were hatching, but he gave valuable advice on which patterns to use and how to fish them.

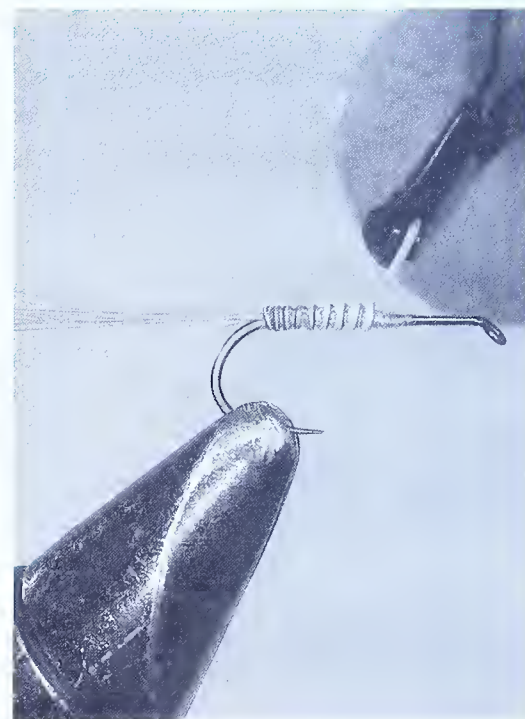
Preston Jennings was a frequent patron of the tavern and he became an influential friend of Art Flick. Flick had long been an admirer of Jennings' *A Book of Trout Flies*, and from it Flick developed an intense interest in the entomology of trout streams. Eventually, prodded by New York writer Raymond R. Camp, he laid aside his rod, took up his insect net and thoroughly researched the insect life of Schoharie Creek, his home stream. Then, in 1947, he wrote his classic *Streamside Guide*, describing in detail the dominant insects of the Schoharie (which, by the way, represent the



1 Tie in the thread behind the eye and wind it back to the bend. For tails, tie in a small bunch of ginger hackle barbules and wind over the butts. Wind the thread back to the bend.



2 Select a large, well-soaked, stripped rib from a ginger hackle and tie in its tip at the bend. Then wrap it forward smoothly to the mid-point of the shank.



3 Clamp the hackle pliers to the butt of the rib and wrap it forward in close (but not overlapping) turns.

dominant insects of most of the freestone trout streams in the eastern U.S.), complete with color photographs of both the naturals and the fly patterns to match.

The book was designed in a compact format—small enough to store in one's fly vest for use in the field. It was the first practical book anglers could use for insect identification while fishing and it was enthusiastically received. In fact, it was probably the book that—more than any other of its time—spurred the interest in entomology among anglers that is so prevalent today.

Art Flick discussed at length the Green Drake hatch and the dissatisfaction of many anglers with their patterns to match it—and in fact, the difficulty of matching most large insects. He reasoned that large imitative patterns merely gave trout more with which to find fault. His solution was to try to create an impression or suggestion of the natural, instead of fashioning its image. His Gray Fox Variant fit this requirement, and in time it became one of the standard Green Drake patterns in the Catskills.

According to its classical definition, a variant is a dry fly with a conventional body

and tails, oversized hackles and short, stubby wings. However, Flick dismissed the significance of the tiny wings and eliminated them in his variant dressings. He was the first fly dresser to use hackle rib as a body material and he used it in several of his patterns, including the Gray Fox Variant. It makes a striking quill-like body that holds up well in hard use and it's easy to dress.


Generally, the ribs from large hackles are best for this purpose, and one doesn't need to be fussy about hackle quality, provided the ribs are in good, unbroken condition. In fact, this is a good way to use the largest hackles in a cape—hackles that would otherwise be useless for ordinary tying.

After stripping off the barbules, the ribs should be soaked thoroughly in water before winding. Otherwise, they sometimes split. I generally keep a water-filled jar on hand, containing ribs soaking for future use. Keeping ribs soaked over long periods doesn't appear to harm them. After winding ribs I like to coat them with clear lacquer to give them a modest sheen.

Unlike the hackle stripped for the body rib, the wound hackles should be as web-free and stiff as possible. Spade hackles—

the short feathers with long barbules found along the edges of many capes—are ideal when available. Their barbules should be as long as 2 1/2 to three times the hook's gape. After winding and tying off the three hackles, their stiffness may be enhanced by compressing the wound hackles with one's fingernails. This should be done cautiously, however, to avoid breaking the thread's hold.

The Gray Fox Variant is more wind-resistant than smaller flies, and if you encounter difficulty in turning it over, using a shorter or heavier leader generally solves the problem. Use a first-class fly dressing and you will find that the fly floats high in virtually every kind of water—riffle, glide or pool.

The Green Drake hatch is almost always full of variables, and even the most experienced anglers sometimes find surprises. If you find an actively feeding trout that ignores your fly, try twitching a Gray Fox Variant subtly just before it floats over him. This is a fly well-suited for this strategy and the results are often explosive. 

Dressing:

Gray Fox Variant

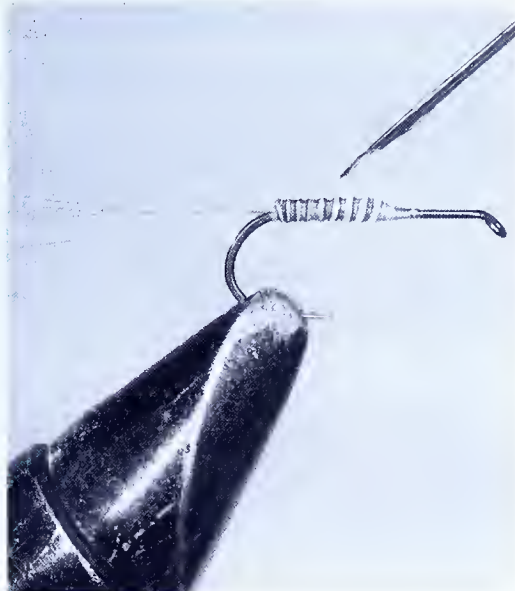
Hook: Size 10 or 12, regular shank, fine wire.

Thread: Size 6/0 yellow prewaxed.

Tail: Ginger hackle barbs.

Body: Stripped ginger hackle rib.

Hackle: One each, grizzly, light ginger and dark ginger.



4 Tie off the rib and trim the excess. Then apply clear lacquer to the body with the dubbing needle.



5 Select one each grizzly, light ginger and dark ginger (or brown) hackle with barbules 2 1/2 to three times the width of the hook gape. Match the hackles and tie them in together (in any order) perpendicular to the shank, on edge and with the dull sides facing the eye. Then bend the stems forward and bind them along the shank with three turns. Trim the excess stems.



6 Grip the tip of the rear hackle with the hackle pliers and wind it forward in slightly spaced turns. Tie it off. Then wind the second hackle between the turns of the first and tie it off. Next, wind the third hackle through the first two and tie it off. Then compress the wound hackles with the fingernails of your right thumb and forefinger. Then trim the excess hackle tips. Finally, whip-finish the thread behind the eye and apply head lacquer.

POPPER

Perfection



by Art Michaels

A splashy strike, fast action and lively battles characterize fly rod popper fishing. That's why I latched on to popper fishing soon after I started flailing my first fly rod, some 25 years ago, and I've been hooked on it ever since.

You could get hooked, too. Follow these basic ideas and have a terrific time with poppers this season.

Tackle for popper fishing is simple. You don't need tapered leaders for small poppers. I use a section of six-pound-test monofilament for a leader, and I make it the length of my fly rod—either eight feet or nine feet.

I use a tapered leader (1X or 2X) with large poppers so that the lure doesn't plop in front of me in a tangle of fly line. A tapered leader helps prevent a large popper from hooking the line or leader, spoiling the cast. It also helps the heavy lure turn over on the forward swing of the cast.

I've used small poppers with fly rods from 5 1/2 feet long to nine-footers, so you can use just about any fly rod you have. My current favorite popping outfit for panfish is an eight-foot graphite rod for 7-weight line. For river smallmouth bass, a nine-foot fly rod for 9-weight line fits the bill.

My popper arsenal comes from two sources. I make my own, and I often buy them. I get materials and supplies for making poppers from a variety of mail order houses.

If you tie flies, making poppers is convenient because you probably already have most of the materials you need. If you'd like to learn fly tying, making poppers is an enjoyable way to get started. The larger hooks, thicker thread and easy skills you need are a stepping stone to learning more demanding fly tying skills.

Most all of my poppers, the ones I make and the ones I buy, are made of cork. Cork is durable and easy to work with, and most everyone carries cork popper bodies.

Most of my poppers are yellow, white or black. I stick to these colors because I've never had reason to go with anything

else. The yellow and white ones work well because on the water I can see them clearly. The fish can see them clearly, too, and that helps them zero in on the target. Because I can see them clearly, I can time the strike better.

On evening forays for bass and panfish, I usually start fishing in bright late-afternoon sunlight. Black and other dark-colored poppers work best in bright light. Against a light sky, the fish see only the dark silhouette of the bug, not its color. For this reason, I like a black popper so it shows up starkly against a whitish background. It's harder for me to see on the water, especially against a glare, but it draws strikes. So when I lose sight of the lure, as soon as I hear the splash of the strike, I set the hook.

Important feature

When you buy poppers or make them, you have to consider one crucial aspect that makes or breaks the effectiveness of the bug. To understand this quality, hold a bug sideways. Imagine a line perpendicular to the bug body (straight up and down) at the end of the bug body. If the hook point touches or crosses the line, you won't have enough clearance at the hook point to connect solidly on the strike. The hook point on the best-built bugs should be well behind this imaginary line. This quality is even more important than the size of the hook.

If you make your own poppers, be sure the hook sizes you buy are the right sizes for the popper bodies so you can build this hook clearance into the bug. I use Mustad 33903 hooks exclusively. These hooks are hump-shanked, so that when I glue them into the cork bodies they are less likely to turn. In addition, the shanks of these hooks are extra long, providing that vital clearance at the back of the bug body.

When you buy poppers, inspect them to make sure they have adequate hook clearance behind the body.

I carry a selection of about 20 poppers

in a small, clear-plastic flip-top box. It fits in a pocket of my fishing vest, so it's convenient to carry anywhere. I travel light when I fish poppers. I usually bring only my fly rod, camera, and a few other items of tackle.

When you fish poppers, if your approach is quiet, short casts work well. One of my favorite places to work poppers is the edge of a stand of lily pads. I also like to try my luck at the edges of weed lines and near stumps. I seem to catch the biggest bluegills on poppers. I think the reason is that these brutes don't see a lot of lures dragged before them, and I think they actually see even fewer poppers.

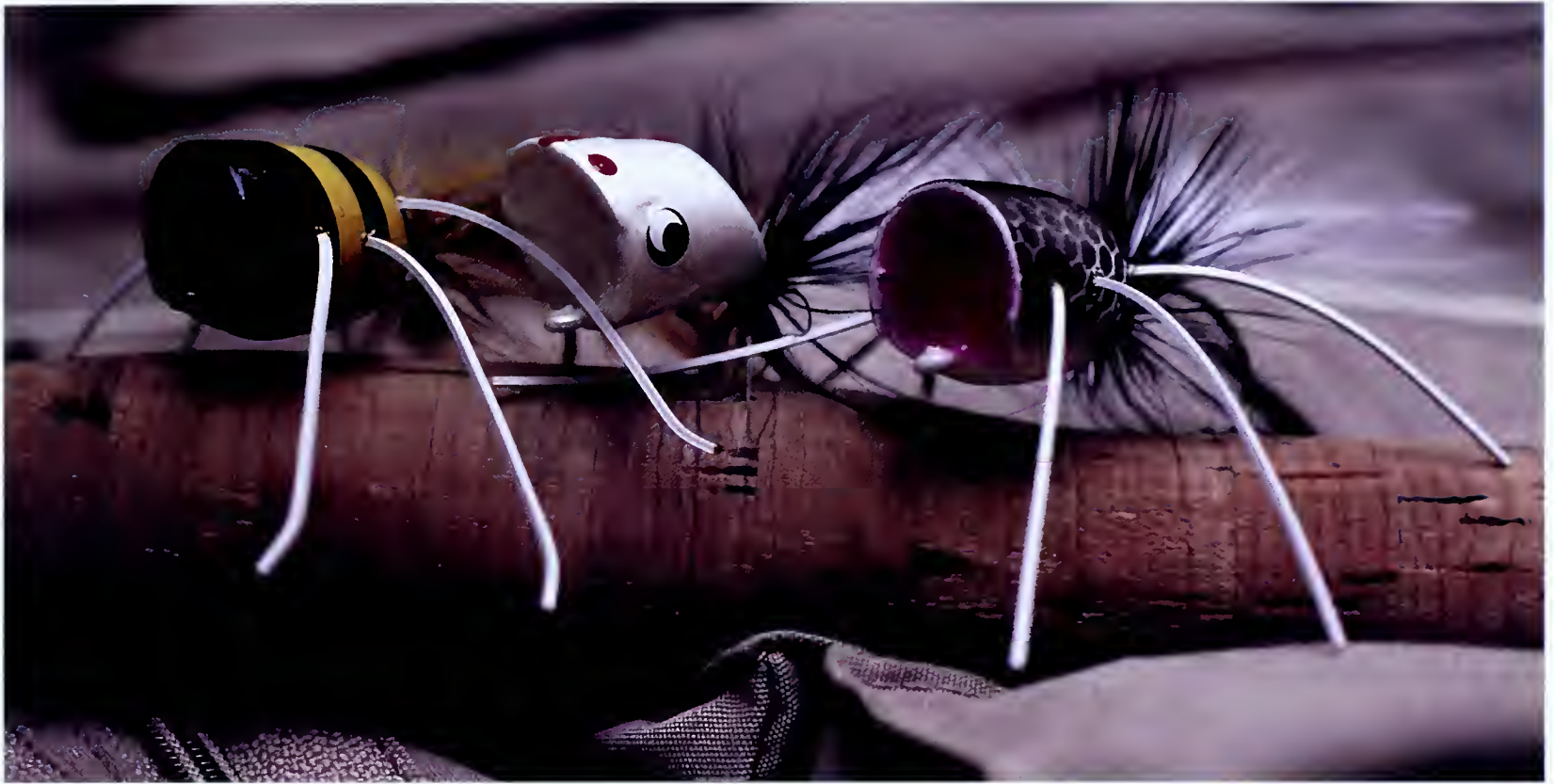
If you don't get a strike after a few casts to the same spot, move on. The commotion of these large lures might turn a fish's initial curiosity into wariness, so give the area a rest and return after about 20 minutes or more. When you return to a spot, try a different approach. Let the lure hit the target area from a different angle so that you work the lure in a different direction than you did before.

Fish them slowly

The key to working poppers effectively in weedy lakes is to fish them slowly. When you cast your popper and it touches down, wait. Give it 10 or 15 seconds before you twitch it, but be ready for a strike at any time from the moment it touches down until you lift it off the water. I usually let the lure rest for 10 or 15 seconds only because I'm impatient. I admit, though, that I have caught tanker-sized bluegills and husky largemouths in places where I let the lure rest for 30 seconds to about a minute.

A twitch now and then between moments of stillness often draws hard strikes. And if the fish don't seem to want the offering, slow the retrieve. You'd be surprised how slowing your retrieve can speed up the action.

On the other hand, when I go after smallmouth bass in rivers and streams, I often rip my poppers across the surface. I strip in line as fast as I can, and I get them gur-



gling and spraying as much water as I can. The livelier I work poppers, the more strikes I get.

Poppers imitate all kinds of things, so it's hard to say exactly why fish strike them. The way you work a popper suggests different prey. A popper can appear to be an injured minnow at the surface. It can resemble a frog. It can be mistaken for any number of insects.

I like to use a popper with a cupped face because its action suggests all kinds of prey. This design creates a pop, gurgle or splash when you twitch the popper. The noise attracts attention. Sometimes, the louder and more gurgly, the better.

Poppers are available in many different shapes. These designs can be used for a variety of purposes. Still, I stick exclusively

to cupped-face ones. The dished-out face lets you make the most commotion on the retrieve.

Popper fishing can be good anytime. I like early morning, evening, or at night. My choice most often is early morning, or first light, especially on heavily fished waterways. You can scare up the most action with poppers if you're making your first casts of the day at first light. Early in the morning the fish have rested the longest. They are more likely to mistake your popper for food at that time than at any other time.

Now is the time to tie up a few poppers or stock up on ones already made, and June, when the bass season opens, is the best time to try your luck. Bluegills and bass will quickly engulf a popper, giving you splashy strikes, plenty of hits and lively battles.

Poppers, popper-making supplies



- Cabela's, Inc. 812-13th Avenue, Sidney, NE 69190; 800-237-8888.

- The Gaines Company, Gaines, PA 16921; 814-435-2332.

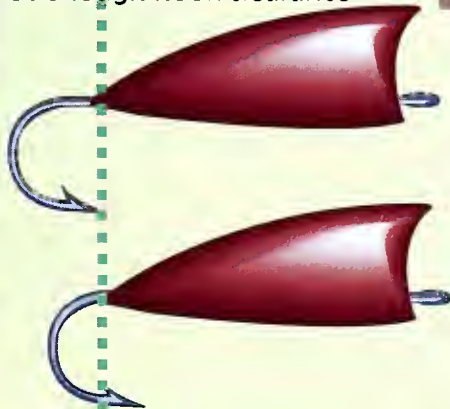
- E. Hille, P.O. Box 996, Williamsport, PA 17703; 717-323-7564.

- Orvis, P.O. Box 7A, Manchester, VT 05254-0798; 802-362-3900.

- Reed Tackle, Box 1250, Marshalls Creek, PA 18335; 717-223-7044.

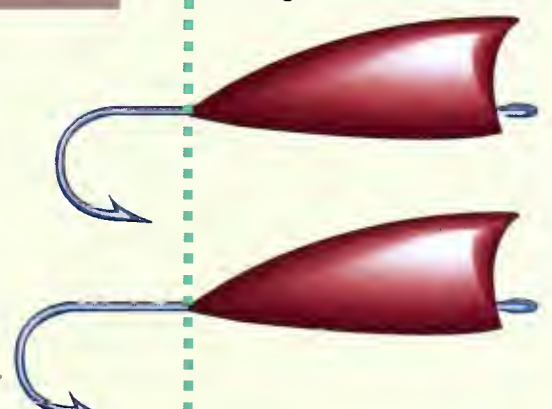
Bought or Built Poppers

not enough hook clearance



If the hook point touches or goes through an imaginary line drawn perpendicular to the back end of the popper, the popper doesn't have enough hook clearance for solid hook-ups.

enough hook clearance





OPENING

IN THE ALLEGHENY



The April sunlight broke into a million tiny jewels as it reflected off the ripples and runs of the mountain stream. After I released my fourth trout of the morning, I paused to take in the scenery around me. Rugged ridges studded with huge boulders cradled the stream in a narrow valley, and the budding maples announced the arrival of spring and another cycle of new life. A black squirrel scolded me roundly from the safety of a nearby beech. This breathtaking scene and fine fishing were all part of another opening weekend of trout season in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF).

The Allegheny National Forest encompasses more than 500,000 acres of the Allegheny Plateau country of Warren, Forest, Elk and McKean counties. Extensive networks of hiking trails and Forest Service roads crisscross the forest, and there are thousands of acres of roadless wilderness, where you can get comfortably lost in a minute if you try. The Allegheny National Forest truly is an "accessible wilderness," and an excellent place to spend opening day.

Some 40 ANF streams and two lakes are stocked with trout by the Fish and Boat Commission, with additional stocking provided by area cooperative nurseries. The forest is also laced with nearly 100 small, unstocked streams where you can pursue native brook trout in relative solitude on public land with virtually no access problems.

The opening day bounty of the ANF is best described by looking at the Forest's three component watersheds: the Tionesta Creek drainage, the Clarion River watershed and the direct tributaries to the Allegheny River and Allegheny Reservoir.

photo at left: Dick McMonoy; photo at right: Bob Petri



DAY NATIONAL FOREST

BY ROBERT L. PETRI

WILD TROUT

In addition to excellent fishing for stocked trout, the ANF offers productive fishing for wild trout. A number of the small to medium-sized stocked streams within the ANF hold ample populations of wild brown trout. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee is based in Tionesta, and he monitors the trout streams of the Forest. Lee suggests that anglers looking to fish over wild trout concentrate on the upper portions of stocked streams that feed the Allegheny Reservoir, as well as the streams in the upper Tionesta Creek watershed.

Lee says that wild brook trout can be found in the upper reaches of almost all the stocked ANF streams, but the best brookie fishing is in the small unstocked streams that drain almost every notch and gully in the Forest.

John McKown, lifelong resident of the Warren area, is Northwest Regional Vice President of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited. McKown fishes exclusively for wild trout in the small streams of the Forest and surrounding areas. He rates the direct tributaries of the Allegheny River along Route 62 between Irvine and Tionesta, and the small streams that feed the Allegheny Reservoir, as some of the best bets for ANF native brook trout action. Area Fisheries Manager Lee concurs and also recommends some of the small, unstocked tributaries of Tionesta Creek.—RLP.

Tionesta Creek

Tionesta Creek is the largest stream contained entirely within the boundaries of the Forest, draining portions of all four Pennsylvania ANF counties. The stream is well-stocked over its 20-mile journey from Barnes in Warren County downstream to Kelletville in Forest County. It's a popular opening day ANF destination.

This is big water, averaging over 100 feet wide in places. There is excellent fishing here over stocked trout, and each year anglers take a good number of large holdover browns. Route 666 closely parallels the stream, and access is easy.

The ANF tributaries of Tionesta Creek in the lower portion of the watershed offer varied opening day opportunities. Ross Run enters Tionesta Creek several miles below Kelletville. Salmon Creek and its main tributary, The Branch, commit their flows just below Kelletville. Both streams provide good early season fishing over stocked fish. Forest roads 127 and 145 lead you to both streams, or you can get to upper Salmon Creek off Route 66 at Marienville. Blue Jay Creek is a stocked brook trout stream that tumbles into the Tionesta at Lynch, about 12 miles upstream from Kelletville. LR 1003 parallels the entire length of the stream.

The upper Tionesta watershed is comprised of the East, West and South branches of the stream and their tributaries. The West Branch is stocked from above Chapman Dam State Park near Clarendon down to Barnes. Chapman Dam lake offers flatwater opening day trout fishing. Along the way, the West Branch picks up the flow of Two Mile Run at Sheffield, Four Mile Run at Saybrook and Six Mile Run at Tiona. All three of these small streams feature good opening day fishing. Route 6 provides access to the West Branch and its tributaries.

The South and East branches of Tionesta Creek are moderate-size streams with long stretches of unspoiled Forest land along

their lengths. Route 948 south of Sheffield offers easy access to the lower reaches of the South Branch.

For a more solitary angling experience, try hiking into the upper reaches of the stream above Brookston. Route 6 near the Tionesta Scenic Area provides access to the East Branch. The section of the stream below Jojo is remote and productive.

Clarion River tribs

Some of the most beautiful ANF trout streams flow south to meet the Clarion River. These rhododendron-clad waters tumble through steep, wooded valleys and beaver meadows. The scenery and an extensive stocking program make these streams good choices for opening day.

Millstone Creek is the westernmost of these streams, entering the Clarion near Belltown in Elk County. Sections of Millstone Creek's East and West branches are also stocked, and offer good fishing. The Millstone drainage is reached via Route 66 at Marienville, where a blacktop road heads south to meet the stream at Loleta.

Spring Creek, one of the larger ANF Clarion River tributaries, enters the river at Hallton. It is stocked for about 10 miles from the mouth upstream. The East Branch of Spring Creek, Wolf Run and Big Run are small, stocked tributaries of Spring Creek. Route 66 at Pigeon provides access to the upper Spring Creek watershed. Route 899 south out of Marienville provides access to a dirt road leading to lower Spring Creek.

Continuing east, Bear Creek and Big Mill Creek are both good bets for opening day. Bear Creek enters the Clarion near Port-

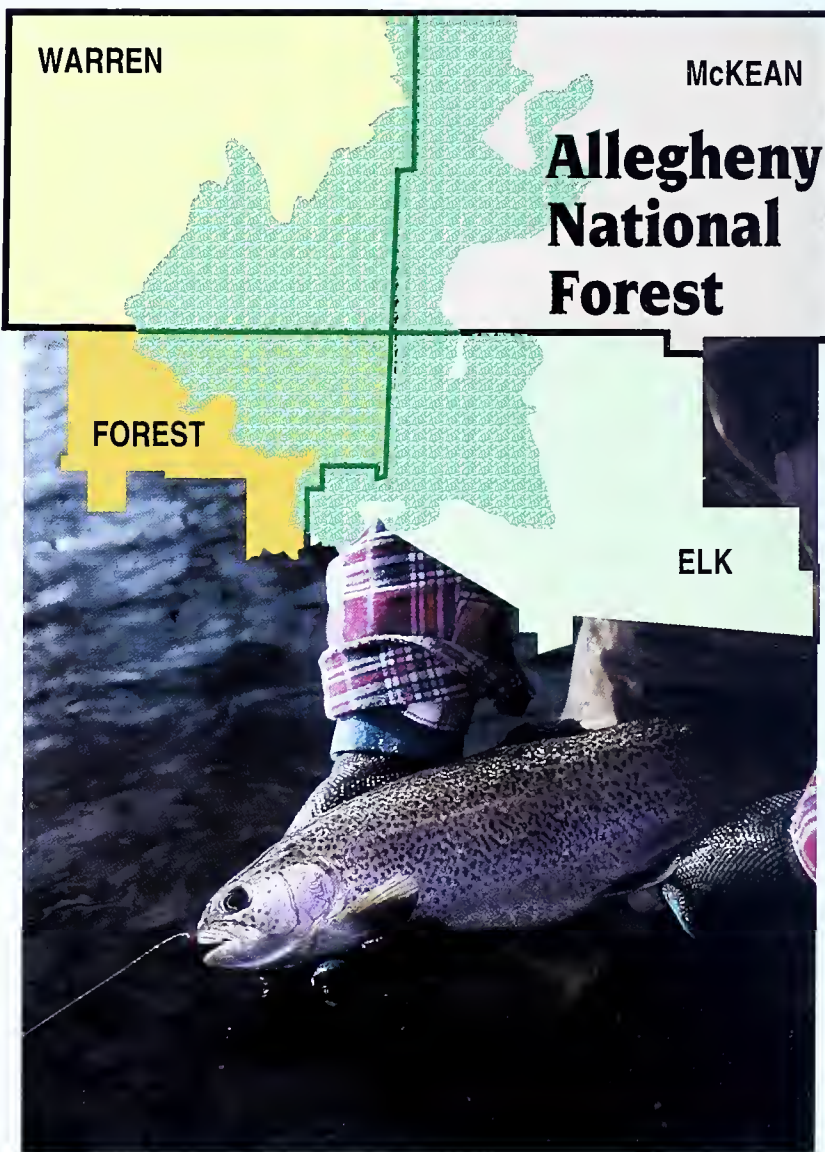


photo-Dick Mermont/ map graphics-Ted Walke

land Mills along Route 949. This stream has good fishing over stocked brook trout. Mill Creek meets the river several miles upstream from Portland Mills, and features a one-mile fly-fishing-only area in its lower reaches. Forest Service Road 143 leaves Route 948 north of Ridgway and parallels most of Mill Creek.

Twin Lakes and Hoffman Run are on the eastern edge of the Forest, off Route 321 south of Kane. They offer side-by-side lake and stream fishing on opening day.

Allegheny River tribs

The direct tributaries to the Allegheny River and Allegheny Reservoir easily form the largest and most diverse of the three major ANF watersheds. These waterways offer a wide range of opening day choices.

Route 321 is the gateway to the excellent trout fishing in the stocked streams that enter the Allegheny Reservoir. Willow Creek, about 15 miles east of Bradford, is the northernmost of these streams. Sugar Run and its more isolated North Branch enter the Reservoir at Sugar Bay. A few miles south of its junction with Route 59, Route 321 bisects the length of the bubbling Chappel Fork. Fishing is productive both upstream and downstream from the highway bridge.

A few miles farther south, Kinzua Creek and its South Branch join the Reservoir at Red Bridge. Kinzua Creek is a large stream with some big holdover browns supplementing the stocked fish. A delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only area begins at the Route 219 bridge at Tally Ho and extends 2.3 miles downstream. Forest Service Road 122 provides access to most of Kinzua Creek. The South Branch of Kinzua Creek parallels Route 321 for several miles south of Red Bridge. You can find good fishing along its undercut banks and in its deep, log-jammed pools.

A shout away from the city lights of Warren, Browns Run enters the Allegheny River about eight miles below Kinzua Dam. Browns Run is a medium-sized stream, with many stocked brookies and browns in its runs and pools. Route 59 just east of Warren provides access.

East Hickory Creek is the most popular of all the ANF streams that flow directly into the Allegheny. The lower reaches feature stocked trout in a medium- to large-stream setting. Beaver Run, a stocked brook trout stream, enters East Hickory in this section. A very popular delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only project on East Hickory begins at the junction of Otter Creek and extends 1.7 miles upstream. Queen Creek enters East Hickory at the upstream end of the project. Stocking on East Hickory ceases about two miles above Queen Creek. Above this point, the stream flows from its headwaters near Heart's Content through the Hickory Creek Wilderness Area, where there is walk-in-only fishing for wild brook and brown trout. Route 666, off U.S. Route 62 at the village of East Hickory, offers access to the East Hickory Creek watershed.

Effective early season ANF tackle and techniques are as varied as the diverse nature of the fishery itself. However, there are some common denominators that usually apply to all the Forest streams early in the season. Low water temperatures and high flows can be expected in April on almost all ANF waters, and you can meet these conditions best by fishing your lure, bait or fly slowly and deeply.

Nymph, streamer patterns

Carry an ample supply of standard nymph and streamer patterns in sizes 6 through 12. Effective nymph patterns include the Hare's Ear, March Brown and Hendrickson. Larger stone fly nymphs in black and dark-brown also work well. Attractor-type stream-

MAPS

The U.S. Forest Service publishes a detailed map of the Allegheny National Forest. There is a nominal fee for the map. Contact: Allegheny National Forest, 222 Liberty Street, Warren, PA 16365, or call (814) 723-5150 for ordering information.

Several ANF streams are included in the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Wilderness Stream Program. This program is limited to streams in a wilderness setting that contain fishable wild trout populations. *Let's Go Wild Trout Fishing in Pennsylvania* is a free brochure available from the Commission that lists the streams in the Wilderness Stream Program, and gives their locations. Send requests to: Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Publications Section, PO Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Please include a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope with requests.—RLP.

ers like the Gray Ghost and White Marabou are hard to beat, especially on the larger stocked streams like Tionesta Creek.

Work these flies slowly and deliberately in the cold waters of April. Carefully drift them past boulders and other instream obstructions, and through areas of slack water near the heads of pools.

Dry flies

Fishable opening day fly hatches on ANF streams are the exception rather than the rule. However, a pre-season warm spell can mean opening day dry fly fishing. There are good hatches of Blue Quill (*Paraleptophlebia*) mayflies and Early Black Stoneflies throughout the Tionesta and Allegheny watersheds. The Blue Quill is especially abundant on the East Hickory project water. Carry some Blue Quills in size 18, and a dark downing Stonefly pattern in sizes 12 and 14 to be prepared.

Spinning tackle

Angler with spinning gear can do well on the early season ANF streams with small to medium-sized spinners in silver, gold or fluorescent colors. On the larger Forest streams, cast these offerings up and across the flow and work them through likely holding water. On the smaller streams, cast directly upstream and retrieve. Small crankbaits and 1/16-ounce jigs in white or green often fool fish that have seen one too many spinners.

If you fish bait, you can't go wrong with a redworm or nightcrawler drifted slowly through the runs and pools on a size 6 hook below a few small splitshot. In streams like Kinzua Creek where rainbow trout are stocked, salmon eggs and mealworms are often the best choice. Live or salted minnows also account for many fish on opening day. If the usual baits fail, try something unconventional like a small crayfish or a caddis larva on a light-wire hook. The results might surprise you.

The Allegheny National Forest offers opening day anglers an impressive array of trout fishing opportunities. There are places where you can almost fish from your car, and other areas where a mile-long hike is necessary to get to the water. There are tiny step-across brook trout streams, big, broad waters where abundant stocked trout lie waiting, and lots of water that's in between. It all flows through wild and scenic land that belongs to you and me. Make Pennsylvania's only national forest a part of your opening day plans this year.



The Spell of Winter Trout

by David A. Wonderlich



Except when they are in their spawning colors, I believe trout are never more beautiful than in winter. A rainbow's side and cheek stripes approach the electric hues of the most brilliant sunset. Brook trout transform their bellies to a deep cherry bordered with pearl. Brownies add a golden touch to their green sides, and sharpen the vividness of their spots so that they appear to be the work of an artist's brush. These are the hard-fleshed trout of winter—to be observed, pursued, enjoyed, appreciated—and occasionally caught.

photo-David A. Wonderlich

The trout that we catch from Pennsylvania's creeks in the winter are survivors. They are the fish that made it through the fishing season, past all the anglers and beyond the finned and feathered predators as well. They have earned the reputation as being educated, and having sharp instincts. They seem to have made it because they are selective in both what they eat and when they eat it.

The conditions that winter imposes on the cold-blooded trout don't help the trout or the angler, either. Not only don't they feed as often in the winter, but they aren't caught as easily when they do feed. The temperature, the snow, the crystalline clearness of the stream, the frozen water on the line, the slippery banks and stream bottom, frigid wading, lack of daylight hours—all these conditions make winter trout fishing a challenge.

The trout are there and they would like to feed, as instinct tells them they must. The food supply is limited and the amount of energy the trout is willing to expend in pursuit of a meal is minimal. A lot has been made of a trout's refusal to take an angler's offering in the winter—that you have to hit them on the nose with the hook. This is true to some extent, although I believe we are probably less patient in the winter and are more unwilling to change flies and size of tippet than during the major hatches of May.

Freshly stocked fish in late spring refuse an offering that doesn't look right, an offering that is not the right size or color, or an offering that does not have natural action. Winter trout are at least as selective, if not more.

Along with fly selection, approach and methodology in presentation are the keys to attaching the business end of your line to a trout. These are the major factors in any season, you might say, and you would be correct. But the means of carrying out these key factors are as different for winter when compared to the other seasons as they are between fishing low, clear water and high, muddy water.

Cold water seems to trigger many anglers automatically to reach for large flies and thick leaders. Most fishermen equate winter water and the habits of its trout with early springtime fishing in snowmelt-swollen streams. Just about the opposite is usually true on Pennsylvania's winter creeks.

The nymphs that are in the water are not fully grown, so our flies should reflect this smaller, immature size. If there is a time to use smaller nymph sizes of patterns normally tied one or two sizes larger, it is in the winter.

By the time mid-April rolls around and the traditional opening of trout season takes place, the typical sizes for our favorite patterns are correct. Not only are the immature nymphs smaller during the winter, but flies that normally emerge and are fully grown also tend to be smaller. So instead of going larger, tie or select smaller sizes for the winter.

Nymphs

I like nymphs in sizes 14 and 16 with an occasional 18. I prefer to tie them, for my winter angling, to give the trout an impression of the food they are looking for, rather than an exact duplication with legs, etc. I like using different colored turkey

feathers to represent the wing case so that the fly appears to be flat with a top and bottom as it drifts in the current. I like dubbed fur for the body, even though my sons (and most of my fishing friends) use the synthetics.

Either way, the body should be "picked out" after the tail is added and the fly is complete. I simply tie the winter nymphs in black (with slate wingcase), rust (turkey wingcase), brown (turkey wingcase), and a small gray (very dark brown or silvery)

wingcase. These nymphs give you the selection you need to match what the trout expect to see in February and March.

My underwater selection includes a fly that doubles as a wet or emerger in the same colors and sizes as the nymphs, but I tie it with a short wing over the back instead of a wingcase. I always have a few large, black nymphs and wets along to imitate crane flies and stone flies. I also use a sculpin minnow and crawfish.

Wooly buggers are a standby, especially when I find good trout-holding locations in deeper water. If there is no surface feeding,

I usually begin with a bugger pattern. I like oranges and reds for tails on limestone water and the more subdued browns, blacks, olive, gray and white for freestone creeks.

Midges

Midges are also an important part of my winter fly boxes. I catch as many trout on the surface while fishing limestone water as I do below the surface. The best opportunity is during the middle of the day when the sun is most directly on the water. Sizes 24 and 28 flies work best to imitate the minute midges that hatch throughout the winter. The trout refuse anything much bigger than a size 24.

If you try a 28 and the trout look but turn away, tie on an extra three feet of 7X or 8X tippet. Trout can be very leader-shy in the clear winter water, and the smaller tippet can produce quick results.

The hottest color for the body is the Adams gray. I tie the midge with the gray body and two turns of a size 28 grizzly hackle with no tail. The tail adds length to the fly and the 28 without its tail looks a lot like the natural. I also tie the midge in black. A very small olive should be a part of your year-round selection. For winter an 18 works best, although I have them in my box from 14 (wishful thinking) down to 20.

A quiet approach with a low profile is just as important, or more so in the winter, as they are during the summer. A careless approach may account for many refusals handed out by cold-water trout. The cold water carries a much higher content of oxygen in the winter, which allows the fish to hold in more open locations than in the summer. They are more aware of certain movements along the bank than in other seasons, and approaching the casting position should be well thought out before making a mistake and spooking the fish.

Long nine-foot to 12-foot leaders help keep surface disturbance at a minimum while keeping visible floating line away from the fish. Sounds like low water fishing in the summer, doesn't it? There are many similarities.

These trout are the hard-
fleshed survivors of
winter—to be observed,
pursued, enjoyed,
appreciated—and
occasionally caught.

Precision coverage

Along with the low, quiet approach with a long fine leader, the angler should cover the deeper, slow current areas with precision. Trout are in locations where they don't have to expend a lot of energy and at the same time give them a chance for a meal. Deeper, slow-water stretches should be worked close in to far away. Trout low in pools are not always easy to see until they flee across the clear water and spook the rest of the pool. Fish the lower sections first, or go above and fish for the trout at the head of the pool by casting downstream to them.

Pocket water is a likely location as long as you are able to bring the offering out of the current to the fish—remember that they are less apt to dash out any distance for a meal than they are when the water is warm. Even flowing runs can hold good numbers of fish, too, although the run must be deep enough to allow for a slow current on the bottom. On the runs, I add some weight to get the fly down to the fish.

The last factor of winter trout fishing in open water is confidence, and it can best be explained through a lesson that was given to me years ago by a 10-year-old boy. It occurred the first time Adam came to stay with my parents from his orphanage. When he heard I fish a lot, all he wanted for Christmas from me was to go fishing. On the day we had chosen to fish, over a foot of snow had fallen, the wind blew, and the sky looked like steel—we went anyway.

Because most streams back then were closed to winter trout fishing, we went to the Commission's fly-fishing-only, fish-for-fun project at Bellefonte. Spring Creek never freezes and always has a few trout lurking in its deeper pools and runs. The weather wasn't any different when we arrived at the parking lot next to the metal bridge. The snow was over Adam's boots and I don't know how he was able to move or see under all his clothes and knotted scarf.

I gave Adam an eight-foot glass fly rod to use and showed him how to cast while giving directions: "Lift the rod hard to bring the line out of the water, wait for it to straighten behind you, and then bring the rod forward pointing upstream to the spot you want to fish...follow the line with your rod tip as it floats downstream. If the line stops or pauses, lift the rod tip immediately—you will probably have a fish on."

We had talked about fishing with a nymph while we were in the car. Talking and doing are two different things, especially when you have never used a fly rod before.



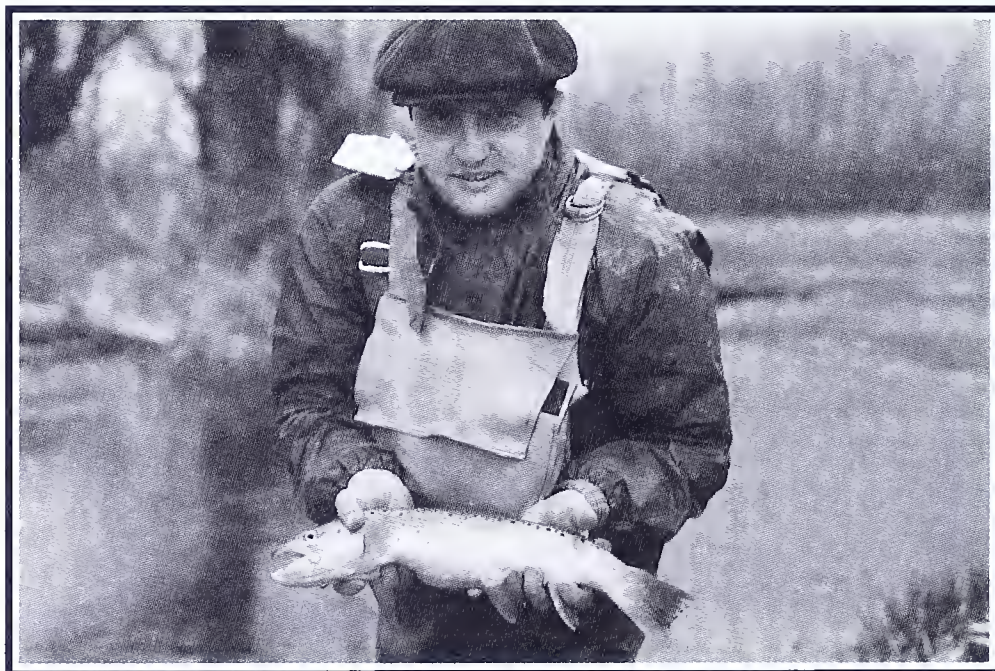
The fishing was not easy that afternoon. Every few casts an ice build-up on the line between guides had to be thawed or the line wouldn't shoot or come in. I looked over periodically and Adam was still casting and concentrating. I switched flies a few times, had no success, and was about ready to tell Adam we should call it a day when there was a loud holler. I turned to look and Adam had his rod high in the air and a trout was splashing mid-stream on the surface. He pulled the line in

as he had been told, jumping and hollering all the time.

Adam netted the trout and I showed him how to take it off the hook without hurting the fish. I especially noticed his big smile and frozen hands as he held the trout briefly under the surface before it wiggled away and disappeared.

"How did you do it?" I asked. "I did what you told me—the line looked like it stopped, so I hooked him!" That was what I had told him, and it is what you are supposed to do.

The key is that Adam believed in the method and that he could catch a trout using it. If you fish confident that any cast can bring a strike, you will cast, watch, mend line and retrieve with more precision, method and purpose. Adam hadn't heard all the tales about winter trout being so sluggish and anti-eating, and he had never even heard of fly fishing before that snowy afternoon. He didn't catch that 14-inch brownie with master casting techniques or secret flies worked by knowing hands. Confidence was the major factor for his success.



Confidence on that now distant afternoon proved easier for the student than for the teacher, although the lesson he gave has guided me to countless winter trout since.

In the winter, the cold air is clear and the quiet of the woods is almost deafening—there is time to think, to ponder, a lot like the unhurried conditions for the trout finning slowly in the deep water. When you do learn

the holds, the best food imitations, the right cast and retrieve speed for a certain day, and when the trout respond and take, the fight stirs the blood and life stands still. There is no date, no time, no chill, only you and the trout...as it is in any season. And that is the way it is, the spell of winter and its trout grip you, and you find yourself enamored with the fineness of winter trout and the challenge of their pursuit.

Gearing Up for Fly Fishing

by Jeff Mulhollem

Time was when I never ran out of flies. I was so dedicated to the sport of fly fishing that I found time to tie a dozen or two a week through the winter in anticipation of the opening of trout season in April. I tied the patterns I knew I would need, and with a few exceptions, I had enough flies to last through the following summer and fall.

Then, like a lot of anglers, I began accumulating other demands on my time—a wife, children, a better, more demanding job and a house to take care of. I found that to be certain I had enough flies just to get me through the early season, I had to take a week off from work in late February or March, and set up a card table in the living room so I could babysit and tie at the same time.

During one of these sessions, with each of our then-infant twin girls propped up in baby chairs on the couch, me in the middle of a batch of Blue Quills, a fishing buddy arrived with some feathers I needed. We must have made a sight, because he laughed at me for 10 minutes or so.

Eighteen months later he ended up with twins of his own (that's what he got for laughing at me), and now he agrees that to get the most out of the early trout season, you have to begin getting ready early. We don't have as much time as we used to for fishing, fly-tying or getting ready to go, for obvious reasons, and now we begin gearing up for April at about this time. We try to make every minute astream count and take nothing for granted. Fly fishing is a sport that takes much preparation, and this is a good time to do it. Here are some ideas.

Leaders

If you don't tie your own, you should. It's not hard, it's less expensive than buying prepared leaders, and it allows you the flexibility to tailor your leaders to your needs

and tastes. I tie seven-footers with strike indicators built in, with heavy tippets for early season nymphing, nine-footers with heavy tippets and droppers for wet fly fishing, and nine- and 11-footers for dry fly fishing.

I tie 5X and 6X tippets for some for the

knotless tapered leaders, and I still use them on occasion (when it is windy and the leader knots can cause tangles, and when fishing in weedy spring creeks where the knots pick up weeds. But once you try the ones you make yourself, you'll rarely use prepared leaders again. It sounds corny, but it's true:

It gives you a feeling of power to know you can make a leader to the exact specifications you need to cast better and catch more fish. The ones you tie simply turn over better.

I sit on the floor, with my leader spools spread out around me, scissors and blood-knot tier nearby, and I keep an eye on the television and tie leaders. It's not a bad way to pass a late-winter's night. You can pick up a leader-tying kit for less than \$25. I recommend it.

Waders, hip boots

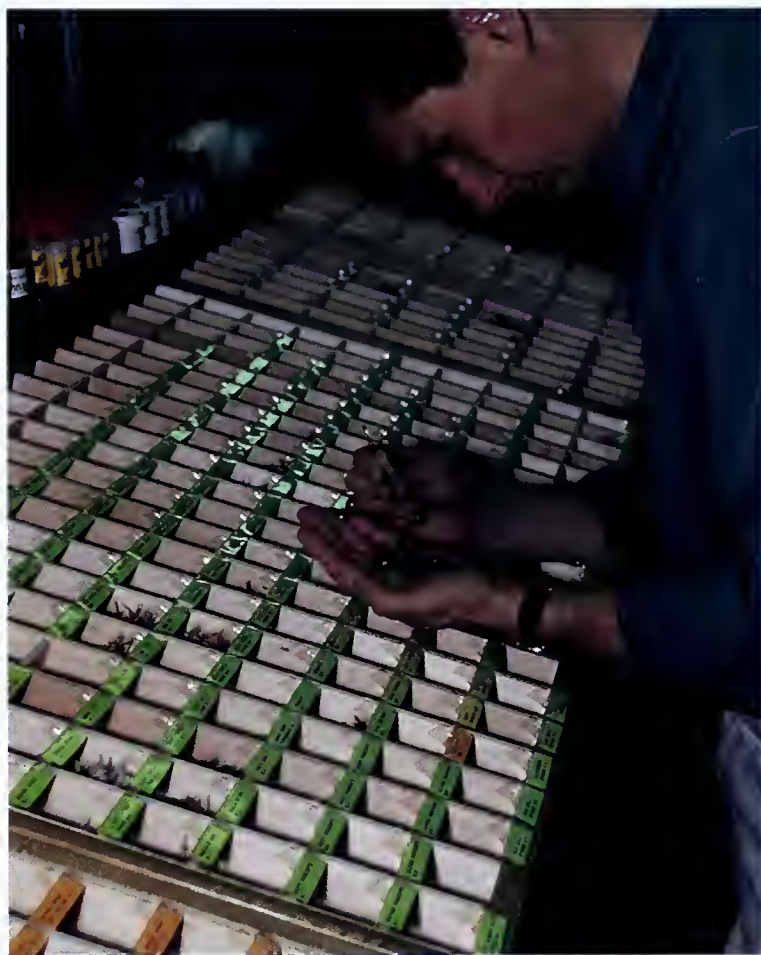
If you don't have neoprene waders, find a way to scrape the money together to buy a pair. They are wonderful! I can't (or maybe I don't want to) remember what trout fishing was like without them. I do a lot of fishing in the big streams of Pennsylvania's north woods in April, such as Pine Creek, Kettle Creek and the branches of the Sinnemahoning, so I often wade deeply.

Early season trout fishing in northcentral Pennsylvania is often

done in winter-like conditions—air temperature near 45, water temperature close to 40. The neoprene keeps you warm.

Whatever kind of boots or waders you intend to use, make sure they are stored properly and don't leak. Repair leaks not by testing and patching. Products like Goop and Aquaseal make some repairs easy, but tire patch kits are still good on rubber boots.

It always amazes me when somebody on a stream somewhere the first day admits his boot is leaking and his foot is big-time cold. That leak was no doubt there last fall and he probably knew it. Did he think it would close up over the winter?



smaller flies I use in late spring and summer, and 3X and 4X tippets for the bigger flies such as Quill Gordons and Hendricksons that I expect to cast in April.

There was a time when I used only

The sport of fly fishing takes much preparation, and now is a good time to prepare.

Felt soles

If you have never had them, you don't know what you are missing. They make you feel much more secure when wading, and on slippery bottomed streams like Penns Creek or Little Pine Creek, they are virtually a must. With felts, you can wade aggressively and not get wet as often.

If you have wading shoes with felt soles, check them. After a few seasons of hard use, the felt often begins peeling off and needs to be replaced. If you have rubber-bottomed, boot-foot hip boots or waders, you can add felt soles.

The best way to do it is to buy a kit that has felt soles and Barge cement, with instructions on how to proceed. If you just need to glue a felt sole on one wading shoe or boot, most good tackle shops can sell you what you need separately.

Some friends of mine who hang out near Slate Run on Pine Creek in Lycoming County have taken this traction thing a step further, and it's an idea you should ponder, especially if you tread often on smooth shelf rock where swift current can make you slide and fall. They insert short aluminum sheet metal screws into their felt soles—maybe a dozen per wading shoe. They act as cleats, and probably keep the soles from peeling off. They work well on the slimy, treacherous bedrock stretches of Pine and elsewhere.

Planning fly tying

If you don't know which patterns you'll need in April, hit the books. You probably won't frequent the same streams in the northcentral region I do during the first few weeks of the season, but here's what I use:

- **Wet flies.** Quill Gordons, Blue Quills, pheasant tails, Hendricksons and caddis emergers, both weighted and unweighted.

- **Dry flies.** Blue Quills, Quill Gordons, Hendricksons, caddises and some small, black stoneflies.

I could carry a lot more patterns, I suppose, but those are the bugs I see and need to imitate on the streams in the big-woods country I fish in April. It now is all I can do to tie all those in the sizes and quantity I need. So I keep it simple and try to get it done. The point is that I plan the fly tying and budget my time, starting now.

Later, when I get a few minutes, I tie nymphs and a few streamers and buggers and whatever else. It's a business-like approach, and it might work for you.

Inventory your vest

Take everything out of all the pockets—everything. After you do this, you might



want to wash and repair the vest. Carefully go through the stuff you removed.

Store anything you haven't used during the last two trout seasons. If you haven't needed it, you probably won't. Get rid of all the rusted, bedraggled flies in your boxes. They just get more pathetic the longer they stay in your boxes, and they just might help ruin and rust your good flies. It's only after you discard the bad flies that you can realistically decide what you need to tie. And you'll have more room for extra patterns.

Reels, line

When was the last time you cleaned your fly line? I can't remember when I last cleaned mine, but I know I was wet fly fishing in October on the Little Juniata River, so I didn't care much if the line floated high. If you are like me, your lines are dirty and will sink. You should clean your line after every fishing trip.

Did you ever take your reel apart last summer after you soaked it several times—falling in and landing that 20-inch fish (yeah, right, me too)? Anyway, you'll probably be appalled at what the insides look like. If you clean it with cotton swabs and relubricate it, it will work better in April and the drag will be smoother if you do happen to tie into a monster.

Stuff

Let's face it. You really do need things like strike indicators, fly flotant, line-cleaner pads, scissors-pliers, a leader straightener and forceps, to name just a few. Stock up on the junk now. I always hide a tube of splitshot in some obscure pocket so that when I drop one container into the waist-deep current when nymphing, I don't have to quit.

A lot of the gadgets I once thought were luxuries I now view as necessities. Don't be without anything you might need on opening day.

New rods

If you have to have that new Sage or Orvis model, get it soon. Then you can practice and get the feel of casting with it in some special regulations area in March without a lot of people around. Actually, frequenting special regulations areas in early spring is a great idea, whether you are armed with an old rod or a new one. Believe it or not, you can have some of the best trout fishing of the year in March when the blue-winged olives hatch. Check the *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* that came with your license for ideas about where you can go.

A few trips before opening day will show you if you have successfully geared up and you can deal with the problems before opening day.



A Fishing Bag

I'm the forgetful type, and I learned early on in my fly fishing that I had to do something to make sure I had my extra reels, socks and leader material—anything I don't normally carry in my vest. The answer was a fishing bag that goes with me on every fly fishing trip for trout. It has worked well over the years and it could be the answer for you, too, if you often find yourself at streamside without the things you need. I keep mine packed all the time, so I'm always ready to go.

This might be a good time to start putting your bag of goodies together so it's ready for the opening of trout season.

The bag

Any roomy duffle bag will do. You could spend a bundle and buy one specially made for anglers, but that's not necessary. I can even stuff my vest, neoprene waders and wading shoes (in a plastic garbage bag) into my bag if I need to.

The stuff

I had to dump mine to write this. Here's what I found:

- A tube of Aquaseal to fix neoprene waders. For a long time I carried a tube of Goop for my rubber waders, along with a tire patch kit, and I used it a few times, too. It once saved a week-long trip to Kettle Creek.
- A small metal container with matches and a \$5 bill. You never know when you might not bring your wallet.
- A plastic bag with a leader-tying kit and extra tippet material. I'm always afraid I'll have to whip out my bag and tie up a leader and someone might see how long it takes me to tie a

blood knot. I don't think I ever had to tie a leader at streamside. I tie more than I need at home. But those extra spools of tippet have come in handy.

- Two pairs of wool socks, a pair of rag wool fishing gloves and a knit tousel cap. I fish a lot of cold weather, so the cap, gloves and socks get used often.

- A big box of popping bugs and bass flies. (We all have our weaker moments when we are tempted to angle for "rough fish.")

- A bug net used to seine the water. I have used it occasionally. I never know the Latin names for what I skim out of the current, but every now and then I have an imitation in one of my boxes.

- A portable fly-tying kit. I don't always carry that, but I never removed it from the bag after my steelhead fishing trip to Erie last December.

- Two fleece-lined suede bags with reels and extra spools. I want the right reel and line no matter which rod I am using, and no matter what conditions I encounter.

- A handwarmer and box of solid fuel sticks. I don't use it much, but it's a comfort to know it's there. One thing about trout fishing in winter is that when you handle a lot of fish, your hands get cold quickly.

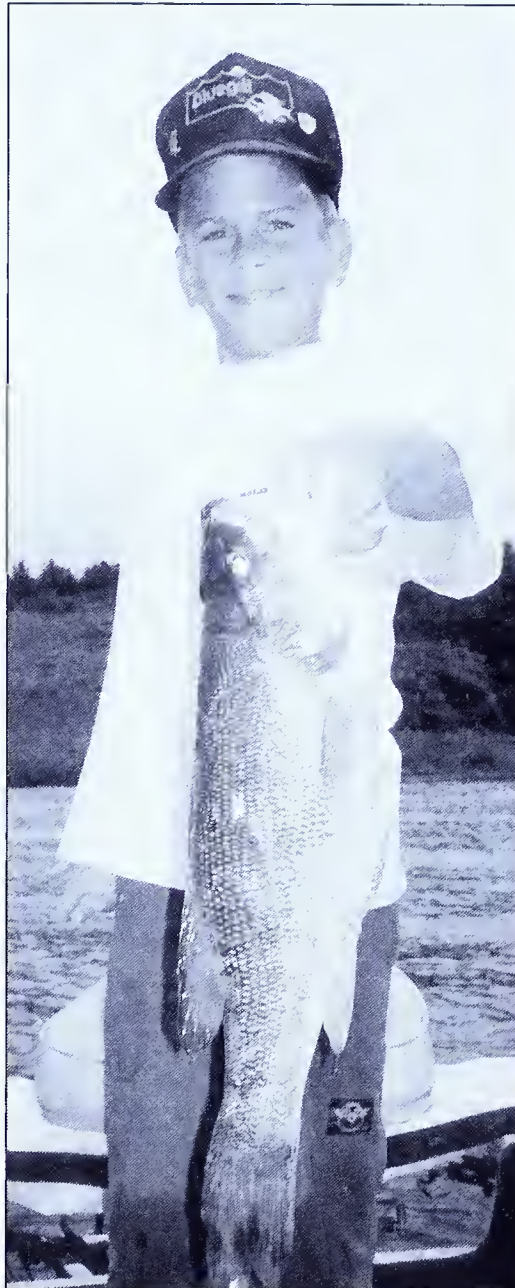
- A bag with three Snickers bars. I love them, and they wouldn't still be there if I hadn't forgotten about them.

There are a few other items, but these contents are the most important. You get the idea. I wouldn't be without my bag. Maybe you should have one, too!—JM.

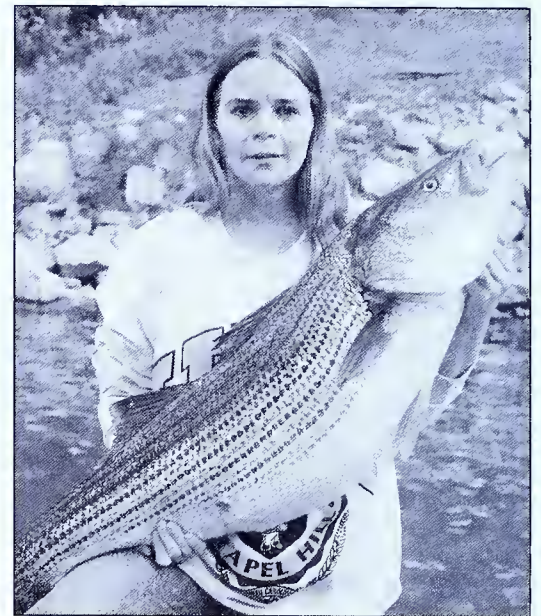
Cast and Caught



Edward Henry, Jr., of Southampton, used a minnow to convince this Churchville Reservoir largemouth bass to strike. The fish weighed five pounds, two ounces and measured 21 1/8 inches long.



Bally resident Kevin Bauman fooled this four-pound, six-ounce smallmouth bass with a chugger. The 20-inch fish was taken out of Boyertown Reservoir in Berks County.



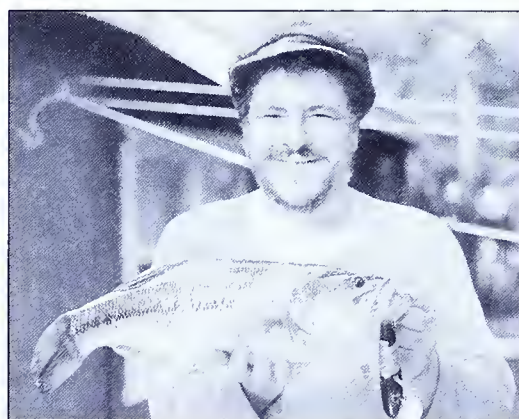
Gayle Hildebrand, of Elizabeth, caught this nice striped bass in Raystown Lake. The fish was 41 inches long and weighed 32 pounds, five ounces. Nice fish, Gayle!



Seven-year-old Eddie Hutchinson, of Churchville, caught this hunker largemouth bass at his secret spot on the Delaware River. The fish, which weighed almost seven pounds, was caught on four-pound-test line. Way to go, Eddie!



Paul Pepper, of Enola, earned a Senior Angler's Award for this Susquehanna River smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a shiner, weighed five pounds, six ounces and was 22 1/2 inches long.



Vincent Fusco, of Albrightsville, earned a Senior Angler's Award for this large-mouth bass. The fish, caught out of Mauch Chunk Lake, weighed five pounds, 11 ounces and was 19 1/2 inches long.



I caught and released this 34-inch striped bass from the Delaware River at 5 a.m. one morning last October. The fish weighed 14 pounds and was caught on a crankbait. The striper fishery improves each year in the river, and many "schoolie" fish are also caught there in the spring and summer.—Kevin Ingram, Philadelphia, PA.

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Cast and Caught



Adrian resident Ray Fiscus, Sr., took this nice smallmouth bass out of the Allegheny River in Armstrong County. The fish, caught on a jig, weighed four pounds and was 19.5 inches long.



Robert Walker, of Media, took this Springton Reservoir tiger musky on a shiner. The fish weighed 22 pounds and was 44 inches long.



This nice northern pike was caught last October by Erie resident David Main. The Lake Erie fish weighed 12 pounds, 13 ounces and was 39 1/2 inches long.



Sue Olszek, of East Brady, used a rubber worm to fool this walleye. The fish, caught in the Allegheny River in Armstrong County, measured 30 1/2 inches and was 11 pounds. Nice fish, Sue!



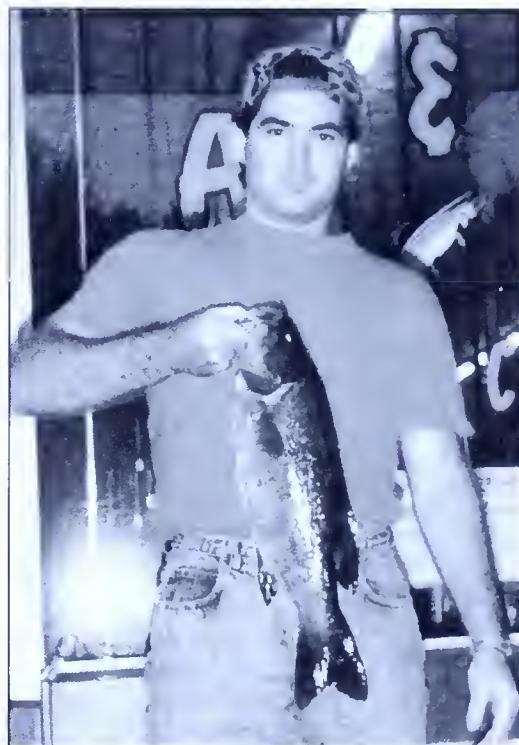
New Castle resident Ronald Young was fishing Lake Arthur in Butler County when this hefty channel catfish attacked his bait. The fish weighed 18 pounds, one ounce and was 36 inches long. Great job, Ron!



Thirteen-year-old Matthew Thomas of Plymouth was fishing from a dock at Harvey's Lake when this nice largemouth bass grabbed his lure. The bass, which was hooked on a crankbait, weighed 3 1/2 pounds and was 19 inches long. Nice job, Matt!



Thirteen-year-old Craig Feeney, of Pittsburgh, was fishing Lake Wilhelm when this nice largemouth bass attacked his rubber worm. The seven-pound, 23-inch fish earned Craig a Junior Angler's Award.



Kristopher R. Kenner, of Warrington, caught this nice smallmouth bass using a minnow. The four-pound, five-ounce fish measured 20 1/2 inches long and was taken from Nockamixon Lake, Bucks County.



Palmyra resident Scott Durborow used corn to entice this carp to bite. The fish, taken from the Susquehanna River in York, weighed 11 pounds, 12 ounces and was 31 1/2 inches long. Great job, Scott!

Cast and Caught



Arthur Kreitz, of Marshalls Creek, used a crankbait to fool this pickerel. He caught the 4 1/2-pound, 26 1/2-inch-long fish out of White Heron Pond. Nice going, Arthur!



This 20-pound, nine-ounce channel catfish earned Terry McCartney, of Washington, a Senior Angler's Award. The fish, measuring 33 1/2 inches, was taken out of the Yonghiogheny Reservoir on a nightcrawler.



State Record Lake Trout

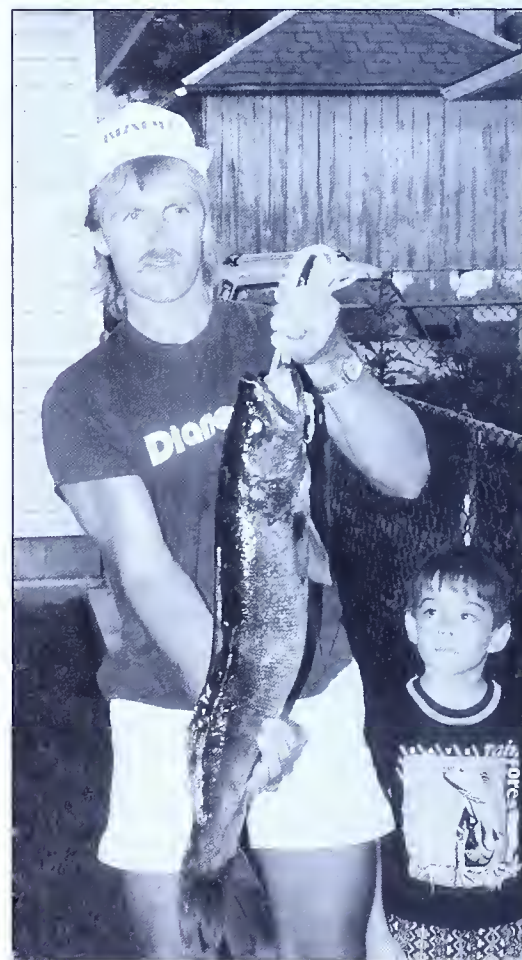
This 25-pound, 10-ounce lake trout was enough to earn Donald L. Wehrle of Erie a place in the state record books. The fish surpasses the old lake trout record set in 1952 by nearly two pounds. He caught the 38-inch fish while trolling a spoon in Lake Erie last June 29.



George Thompson, from Enola, hooked this smallmouth bass while fishing a Dauphin County section of the Susquehanna River. He caught the four-pound, 20 1/4-inch fish on a Bomber.



Monaca resident Dennis Heid earned a Senior Anglers Award for this Ohio River smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a jig, weighed four pounds, four ounces and was 21 inches long.



Gene Kalapay, of Easton, caught this Delaware River walleye. The fish weighed eight pounds, 12 ounces and was 29 inches long. Kalapay duped the fish with a tube lure.

Cast and Caught



photo: Mike Simmons



Ed Miller, of Aliquippa, caught these two nice steelhead from the mouth of Trout Run, Erie County. The larger fish weighed 10.5 pounds and was 29 1/2 inches long. The smaller fish weighed 4.5 pounds and was 22 1/2 inches long. Nice job, Ed!

State Record Steelhead

Brian Daugherty, East Freedom, hefts the new state record steelhead he caught in Lake Erie last September. The fish weighed 19 pounds, two ounces, and was 33 1/2 inches long. Brian fooled the steelhead with a spoon. This steelhead beat the old record by two pounds.



Marvin L. Caber, of Macungie, holds up the 39-inch, 12-pound musky he caught in Ontonagon Reservoir last August. Caber caught the critter using a three-inch minnow on a size 6 hook.



This Lake Redman catfish grabbed a nightcrawler offered by Jonathan Asbury of Dalls-town. The fish was 34 1/2 inches long and weighed 17 pounds, six ounces. Nice fish, Jon!



This handsome bass was caught and released by Eldon Taylor of Breezewood. He used a buzzbait to deceive the Shawnee Lake bass, which was 23 inches long and weighed seven pounds, three ounces. Nice going, Eldon!

Anglers Currents



Commission stocking coordinator Marguerite C. Davidson (center) receives an Outstanding Service Award from Commission President J. Wayne Yorks (right) and Commission Executive Director Edward R. Miller (left). The award nomination, submitted by Bureau of Fisheries Director Delano R. Graff, praises Mrs. Davidson for her outstanding level of achievement and accuracy in years of exceptional and dedicated service to the Commission and to Pennsylvania anglers. Mrs. Davidson received the award during a Commission meeting last November.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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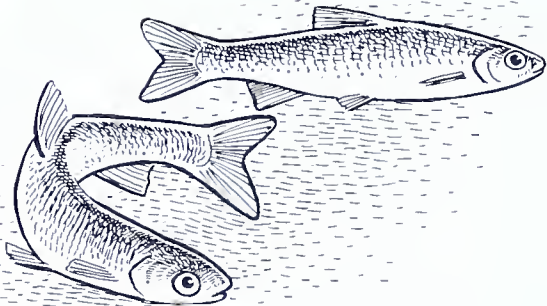
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Angler's Notebook by Sam Everett



Small minnows from 1 1/2 to three inches work best for crappies and yellow perch. Hook the minnows beneath the dorsal fin and set them about 18 to 30 inches below a bobber.

Small plastic containers, like those used for medicines and film, make practical places to store hooks, sinkers, swivels, splitshot, flies and other small items.

Before you discard dry flies that look spent, place them in a tea strainer and steam them over a boiling kettle. The steam revitalizes the hackle and restores the flies' natural fluffiness. Dry the flies completely before you store them again so that the hooks don't rust.

Thinking of opening day yet? Productive wet flies you might want to tie now for opening day include the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, Adams, Hendrickson, Leadwing Coachman and Royal Coachman.

Early in the season in high water, trout often hug the stream banks where the current is slow. A Woolly Bugger cast downstream and worked upstream parallel to the shoreline can be productive.

Many river and stream sections are fished only from one bank. Cross the waterway and work your offerings from the other, less-trodden bank. The fish see a different presentation and might be fooled into striking more readily.

Size 1 spinners are practical for early season trout action. Spinners in this size are small enough to entice trout, but not so small that the trout take them deeply and can't be returned to the water.

Forget your ruler or tape measure? You can still estimate the length of a fish with a dollar bill—it's 6 1/8 (6.125) inches long.

Do you plan to fish bait on opening day? Tie a swivel into your line about 18 inches above the hook, and put your splitshot above the swivel. In this way the splitshot won't slide down the line to the hook.

Fish fact: The word *muskellunge* comes from two Indian words—*was*, which means *ugly*, and *kinououge*, which means *fish*. Muskies are the largest member of the pike family and second largest fish in North America.

Fishing nymphs on opening day can help you score. Working them upstream on a dead drift is the most widely successful method. A drag-free float is essential, so fish the nymph on a short line. Strike immediately with any hesitation in the line.

When you want to hook a trout on a very small fly, just lift the rod to tighten the line. Arm-wrenching strikes won't work.

Search carefully at sport and outdoor shows this winter for bargains on tackle and equipment. Make a list of items you need, and take the list with you to outdoor shows.

illustration- George Lavanish

On the Water

with Dave Wolf

"Impatience"

Harry had all he could take of winter. His arthritis flared during the cold, damp months and the fleeting years of life had left him with the impatience of youth. The winter had been mild for the fourth year in a row and the tip-ups and ice auger had been taken on only occasional trips. His wife Alice was irked by Harry's pacing, and arguments between the two intensified during the winter months. Harry had fiddled with his equipment night after night. He even rearranged his tackle box and sharpened every last hook—even the ones that hung from lures he had not used in years.

Harry had retired last summer, and unlike Alice, a superb housewife who could pass hours on hours cleaning and making cookies, Harry was lost without his job. His life had somehow lost meaning, pushed out to pasture by young upstarts who "could not blow their noses without an instruction manual," according to Harry.

Fishing was his only salvation and his pastime served him well until winter had taken an icy grip on the land. Harry had purchased his license and trout stamp in December and he had frequented the local tackle shop, picking up the odds and ends of terminal tackle he would need for his planned spring fishing.

Harry poured over the issues of every outdoor publication that came in the mail and read and reread books on the subject of fishing. He remained open to innovations and techniques, but the publications also had articles about anglers out there fishing, something that only served to whet his appetite to be on the water.

Harry wasted day after day dreaming about fishing experiences of days gone by and checking the weather, hoping conditions would worsen to cover the lakes and ponds with enough ice to make ice fishing a safe alternative to staying indoors. During one of those shortened February days, Harry rummaged through a tackle box of forgotten plugs—oversized stuff, with teeth marks marring the painted surfaces. At first he dismissed them as something he had used in years past, during family vacations when he would chase bluefish up and down the sandy, sunlit beaches. But on closer examination Harry realized that this was a box of musky plugs and he began to reminisce over each tooth-scarred plug.

He recalled the days when muskies came swirling after the erratically retrieved phonies. He remembered those special occasions when a musky attacked the plug with vengeance, causing the reel to sing and engaging him in a dogged battle. Harry remembered the clumsy jumps of the outsized fish and the head-shaking as the musky sulked on the bottom, akin to a puppy trying to wrestle away a rolled up sock.

Suddenly he recalled the cold wind penetrating his clothing and the ice-formed, jagged edge of the river. He thought about the deep snows he often trudged through to reach the river's edge. Harry slapped his head—had his mind failed him? At one time, musky fishing was his favorite form of fishing. Now he had forsaken it for the trout, and most recently, the bass he had refined his gear to capture.

Harry rummaged in the closet and found the old baitcasting reel and the heavy fishing rod he had used to capture these creatures. Harry fondled the rod and smiled, and soon the baitcasting reel was being cleaned and lightly oiled. Harry smiled at Alice as he announced he was heading to the local tackle shop, once more

muttering something like "need some fresh line." Alice had not seen that smile since winter closed in and she was relieved to see her husband rush off in such a hurry.

That night Harry called Frank, an old fishing companion he had not been in touch with in years. "How's the musky fishing?" Harry inquired. "Don't know—haven't done any in years," Frank replied. "Want to give it a shot tomorrow?" asked Harry. "Sounds great," Frank said.

The next day two aging men met at riverside. The lures sang as they flew over the flow before catapulting into the river with a "ka-splat" landing. "Haven't lost our touch," Harry said flatly with a renewed smile. The river was swollen and the wind relentless. "Conditions are perfect," Frank thought aloud. The plugs churned and jumped over the river's flow and Frank thought he saw a large dark form chasing the plug.

Frank's retrieve was now more erratic, and he began doing figure eights with the plug. He was sure the form was following, but the murky waters made seeing the creature a chore. "Harry, do you see a fish following this thing," Frank yelled above the wind. Harry moved closer to a better vantage point. "Sure do," said Harry, "and he's a dandy." Both men's pulses raced, and the pains that often accompany aging were swept away on the wind.

Never mind that the retrieve did not result in a strike, or that Frank ran out of room to maneuver the lure because of its closeness to the shoreline. The musky turned and sank back into the icy waters. The men cast feverishly now. They had a musky spotted and they would now make the necessary casts for a hook-up.

What really mattered was that Harry was no longer pacing the living room floor and he no longer dwelled on the upstarts that pushed him to pasture. This pasture was a good one, with opportunities galore—even if it wasn't always green.



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Straight Talk

Success Story

On many occasions, public resource agencies, such as the Fish and Boat Commission and local conservation groups like greenway associations or fishing interest groups, see the need for close private-public cooperation to protect valuable resources. Too often, for one reason or another, local people do not seize these challenges, lose interest or fail to take charge, and efforts to implement and complete a cooperative project fall short of expectations or fail. Occasionally there are exceptions.

On June 3, 1993, it was my distinct pleasure, along with Commissioner Paul Mahon, to represent the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission at a project dedication of the Quarry Meadow on the Falling Spring Branch in Franklin County near Chambersburg. Representative Jeff Coy, who has been very supportive of the Commission and the local efforts, also participated in the ceremony.

The dedication was held to celebrate the success of an outstanding cooperative public-private effort to protect and restore the Falling Spring Branch through the property of Valley Quarries, Inc., which contains more than a half-mile of this unique and legendary limestone stream.

The effort began in July 1991, when Valley Quarries vice-president and CEO Thomas Zimmerman agreed to provide a public easement and access to the area known as Quarry Meadows in response to efforts by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Falling Springs Greenway, Inc. (a non-profit organization), and the Falling Spring Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Before 1991, development, cattle grazing, water diversions, and other stream-side activities placed the stream in danger of being lost forever as a high-quality, free-flowing body of water, and the famous trout population was on the verge of extinction.

Over the past two summers, volunteers from the sponsoring public conservation groups, along with the Keepers of Earth, a student group from Chambersburg High School, and local Boy Scouts, worked with Valley Quarries and the Commission to build stabilized cattle crossings, erect solar-powered electric fencing to protect the stream banks, deepened and narrowed sections of the stream, constructed access trails, and planted trees, grasses and wild flowers to further stabilize the stream banks, shade the water and improve the area's appearance. Tom Zimmerman, who admits he was at first reluctant to enter into this agreement, now takes great pride in the results, and says he "feels good to know that the Quarry had a major role in creation of something that will provide enjoyment for the community, both now and in the future."

The Quarry Meadow Project on the Falling Spring Branch is an outstanding example of what can be done by people working together with a common interest and common goal. The community-wide commitment to preserving this revered trout stream for the enjoyment of future generations merits the highest recognition, and those individuals and groups who devoted their time, energy and resources to this effort have earned the deepest respect. It stands as an example for others to follow throughout the Commonwealth.

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, I commend Valley Quarries, Inc., Falling Spring Greenway, Inc., Falling Spring Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the many others who had the vision and the energy to make this reclamation happen. It is an outstanding accomplishment on a very valuable limestone wild trout fishery. It is, however, only the beginning of this story, because these same cooperators, working hand in hand with the Commission, continue with other very important steps to preserve and restore more of this nationally recognized aquatic treasure.

It is a true success story.



Edward R. Miller, P.E.

Executive Director

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

For the Love of French Creek by Darl Black

French Creek's great fishing and scenic beauty cast a spell on Ed Grey all his life. What is the secret of this waterway's mystery?.....4

Dark Nights and White Flies by Charles R. Meck

Check out the details on how to work a white fly hatch and where to perform this magic.....8

Finding and Catching Big-River Trout by Linda Steiner

You might not think big rivers hold big trout. To go after these fish, you must do your homework, which can pay off in catching some trophies. Here's what you need to know to score.....11

The Damselfly Skater by Chauncy K. Lively

Sometimes we focus so intensely on the more familiar mayflies, caddises and stone flies that we overlook the importance of the common damselflies and dragonflies that also frequent our trout streams. This imitation represents a common damselfly with nationwide distribution.....14

Lake Wallenpaupack: 13 Miles of Variety by Tom Fegely

This lowdown can help you catch a variety of fish on one of Pennsylvania's premier lakes.....16

Float the Middle Allegheny for Trout by Mike Bleech

Trout fishing is very good for at least 15 miles downriver from Kinzua Dam, and at selected places much farther downriver, at least to West Hickory. This information explains how to catch those river trout.....20

The Mon's Mixed Bag by Jeff Knapp

There's good fishing in the Monongahela River for smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, hybrid striped bass, white bass, walleyes and saugers. Read the specifics on how and where to increase your Mon River catches.....24

On the Water with Charles F. Waterman

Authors and flies.....31

The cover


This issue's front cover, photographed by Darl Black, shows Ed Grey with a walleye. How well do you know your favorite waterway? How dedicated are you to knowing one favorite fishing place? Ed Grey was a portrait of passionate angling pursuit for his favorite waterway—French Creek. Read his story, beginning on page 4. On page 11, Linda Steiner explains how to catch trout in many of our state's big rivers, and on page 8, accompany Charlie Meck on a successful fly fishing trip over white flies. On page 16, Tom Fegely offers an angler's guided tour of Lake Wallenpaupack, and on page 20, Mike Bleech floats the Allegheny River for trout. On page 24, Jeff Knapp explores the fishing on the Monongahela River, and on page 14, Chauncy Lively gives step-by-step instructions on how to tie a productive fly.

Do you have a house full of fly fishing books? Read Charles F. Waterman's "On the Water" installment on page 31 for an amusing, penetrating look at fly fishing writing—and writers.

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DOCUMENTS SECTION

For the Love of French Creek

by Darl Black



Throughout his life, Ed Grey embraced French Creek as another man might embrace a woman. For decades, Grey studied every graceful bend, quiet pool and gentle riffle. He considered the walleyes to be the crown jewels of this exquisite waterway. French Creek was a temptress that lured Ed at an early age and held him hostage until his death.

"There is no finer or more beautiful waterway in the state," Ed Grey told friends.

"I've spent most of my life angling for walleyes on French Creek. Never had the desire to travel far distances for fishing; everything I needed or wanted was right here. It's hard to explain, but it's as if the creek has cast a magical spell over me!"

The headwaters of French Creek rise in western New York, and then meander through northwestern Pennsylvania before merging with the Allegheny River at Franklin. Warmwater species dominate French Creek once the South Branch joins the main creek stem near Union City. The stream's alternating pools and riffles flow gently by wood lots, pasture fields, and small towns.

The creek cuts a serpentine path through a broad, fertile valley for most of its journey.

But in the southern reaches, changing terrain forces the streambed into a narrower path along steep ridges, offering a wilderness look to this otherwise placid water.

The French Creek Valley is rich with history. The creek has played an integral part of the northwest Pennsylvania's settlement, commerce and recreation. The Senecas called the creek Zynango (Venango), translated as "tobacco," for one of the crops grown in the valley. The French named it Riviere aux Boeufs (LeBoeuf) meaning "Buffalo River." But it was George Washington who first applied the name "French Creek" to the small river in his journal during his 1753 mission to talk to the French military.

"The hills and valleys of this region, with glens of wonderful beauty, should be celebrated in song and story," wrote Venango County historian Charles Babcock. Ed Grey was one of thousands struck by the majesty of this stream, and he celebrated the creek with photographs.

Born in a suburb of Pittsburgh in 1917, Grey fished the lower Allegheny River as a youngster. At age 11 he started visiting Crawford County where his grandfather owned a cottage along French Creek. During these summer vacations the creek began to work its magic. Young Ed vowed he would someday live and work along the creek.

Following discharge from the Marines in the late 1940s, Ed moved to Crawford County, acquired a job with the Meadville street department, and fell in with the right crowd. Art Gourley, Selly Almon, Wallie Elier and Lee Wills were a few of the local fishermen who thoroughly

Ed Grey

enjoyed fishing French Creek. For these men, and Ed, the walleye was king.

"Ed and I fished together for 15 years," explained Art Gourley. "Back then everyone used live bait for walleyes—minnows, shiners or chubs. Most of us did not start fishing for walleyes until about September when the water began to cool, and then we continued fishing until freeze-up."

"The typical rig was a fly rod with 6-pound test, a size 4 hook and just a splitshot for weight. The minnow was hooked through the lips and fished straight down-current so the line would not pick up much floating debris. Occasionally, someone would tie into a musky, but it was walleyes we were after.

"Initially Ed and I disagreed on the best kind of water to fish for walleyes. I liked the slower, deeper eddies, and Ed liked the faster water of riffles and chutes. But after a few trips to my favorite spots, I had him convinced that the better fall and winter fishing was in the flat water."

On fall evenings after work, Ed often joined others at one of the popular spots along the creek. The anglers built a fire, set their lines out, and engaged in bantering. Snow and cold weather didn't stop them. Only when the creek finally iced over in December or January did they give up fishing.

Ed also had an interest in photography. He was self-taught with a small Brownie box camera, and developed an uncanny eye for lighting and composition. His skill progressed, eventually leading to a position as staff photographer for the Meadville *Tribune*. In later years he contributed photos to fishing publications, including *Pennsylvania Angler*.

The Fish & Boat Commission walleye stocking program did not exist before the mid-1950s. During the 1940s and early 1950s, local sportsmen banded together to purchase live walleyes from a Lake Erie commercial fisherman to increase the population in French Creek. Ed Grey assisted in this effort, which included placing donation jars in area taverns to raise funds and physically stocking the fish at various sites along the creek.

"We purchased walleyes for 50 cents each from Ralph's Fishery in Erie," says Gourley. "Some of the fish weighed as much as 8 pounds, but they were still 50 cents each. They caught them in trap nets and trucked them down to Meadville in tanks. There were a lot of blue pike in the lot, too. Heck, they didn't even charge us for the blues. Then the price for walleyes climbed to 75 cents, then higher. Finally it got out of hand and we stopped buying fish to stock."

Ed did not limit his walleye fishing to fall as did many of the area anglers. He knew walleyes could be caught during the summer, too. Anglers who fished during the summer used fly rods with streamers to imitate minnows, fishing the creek's shallower riffles and faster water.

Ed was not much of a fly rodder, so he set about designing a lure that could be used with baitcasting equipment as well as

the new-fangled spinning reels that began appearing in the area following World War II.

The French Creek weighted spinner-and-fly was crafted in the late 1940s—a forerunner of the weight-forward spinner. The lure consisted of a hand-tied yarn and marabou plume streamer on a size 1 ring-eye Sproat hook. The streamer, or fly, was preceded by either a size 2 or 3 Indiana blade on a short-wire shaft with an interlocking clip that permitted changing streamer colors.

The ingenious part of the system was the interchangeable weights crafted from soft, thin sheet lead. The lead was cut in the shape of a heart. The "heart" was then folded in half over the line directly in front of the spinner-fly, creating a sliding head. The sliding weight prevented a hooked fish from obtaining leverage to throw the lure. The size of the heart determined the weight, ranging from about 1/8-ounce to 1/2-ounce. The weight was adjusted, depending on the strength of the current.

Back then, walleye and bass season opened in July. For several years Ed did not have a car, so on his day off he walked the creek, fishing many miles before sundown. As dusk approached, he made his way to a road and hitched a ride back to Meadville.

During the 1940s Ed also began designing and making his own jigs—the lure that would be his trademark for the next 40 years. Ed, Art Gourley and Selly Almond were the first an-

glers to use jigs on French Creek. At first the jig bodies were sparsely tied bucktail. Later Ed tied patterns that incorporated chenille, marabou, bucktail and tinsel. It wasn't long before the hand-crafted jigs were the only thing he fished.

"Never saw a guy in my life who could fish a jig like Ed Grey," reminisces Dave Hornstein, an expert jig angler and one of Ed's frequent fishing companions in recent years. "Ed told me he spent hours on the creek just watching how different baitfish would swim or glide or dart when spooked. He could manipulate a jig, applying nuances that no one else ever considered."

For Ed the eyes on artificial lures were a key triggering factor for gamefish. Every jig, as well as the head of every spinner/fly combo, had to have eyes painted on it.

"I generally fished a jig-and-minnow combo for walleyes, but Ed refused to tip his jigs with bait," Hornstein says. "Ed would say, 'I'll catch them without minnows, or I won't catch 'em at all today.' By the end of the day, Ed managed as many walleyes as I did."

I was introduced to Ed by way of his photos of French Creek, Conneaut Lake and Pymatuning Lake that appeared in *Pennsylvania Angler*. Shortly after moving to Meadville in the late 1970s, I interviewed Ted Fitch about a remarkable 42-pound musky he had caught in the creek. Ed Grey was the only person who had photos of the fish, so I contacted him. It was the start of our friendship.

Ed had retired from the newspaper and was always ready to go fishing at a moment's notice—whether it was the dead of winter or the middle of a summer heat wave.

If the walleyes were biting, Ed was like a school kid on holiday—

*"There is no finer or more
beautiful waterway in the state.
I've spent most of my life angling
for walleyes on French Creek.
I never had the desire to travel
far distances for fishing.
Everything I needed or wanted
was right here."*



thoroughly enjoying every minute. When the fish did not bite, he was eager to analyze the situation. Was the sun too bright or the water too muddy? Were we fishing too shallow, too deep or too fast? Ed had to find the answer, and never wanted to quit until he solved the problem.

Yet, on the days we came away without any fish, he simply commented, "It's simply great to be alive and have an opportunity to pit your knowledge against the wily walleye. Whether you catch fish or not, angling is a win/win situation. Being outdoors, enjoying God's creation, is the best gift anyone can receive."

Dave Hornstein likened every fishing outing with Ed to receiving an oral history lesson. Ed could tell you how a particular section of the creek had changed or remained the same for 40 years. He had recorded just about every big walleye and musky taken from French Creek, and he could tell you who had caught it, exactly where it had been taken, and what kind of lure or bait had been used.

"Ed was a true pioneer of fishing," Hornstein says. "When I was a teenager, Ed was talking about the seasonal movements of walleye, how they react to different lures, and the various feeding moods of the fish. This was before the fishing education revolution of the 1970s. Ed's knowledge of walleyes came by firsthand experience, not by reading a book."

Ed Grey caught his largest French Creek walleye on January 1, 1988. He took the 14-pound, 5-ounce fish on (what else?) a hand-tied jig. The day before, December 31, 1987, Ed had caught an 11-pound walleye standing in the same spot. He unselfishly told anyone who asked where that exact eddy was located.

"I have taken a lot of walleyes, but I'm still learning things about this fish," Ed explained. "I love to share the fantastic

wealth of this creek with other people. People must learn to appreciate our natural resources and be willing to protect them."

He knew French Creek was a special treasure with an incredibly diverse fishery, clean water, scenic views and easy access for anglers and canoeist. In recent years Ed became very concerned about French Creek. He wanted future generations to have the same opportunities to enjoy the creek, the fish and the rich natural heritage.

Ed continued to fish every week right up until he became fatally ill in 1992. Days before he died, he was delivering photos to the Fish & Boat Commission Linesville Fish Culture Station. He told a companion that this was the first time he had ever left home without his camera and fishing rod.

Ed Grey—angling pioneer, lure innovator, photographer—will be remembered by friends. But Ed never wanted to be memorialized. To him, French Creek was a living memorial for every angler. As long as the creek flows free and clean, Ed knew future generations would fall under its spell. And that is what Ed Grey would consider important.

ANGLER

French Creek Facts

- Length: 117 miles.
- Counties: Erie, Crawford, Mercer and Venango.
- * Major tributaries: LeBoeuf Creek, Muddy Creek, Conneaut Creek, Gravel Run, Woodcock Creek, Cussewago Creek, Conneaut Outlet, Little Sugar Creek, Deer Creek, Mill Run and Sugar Creek.
- Diversity of aquatic life: 77 fish species, more than any other waterway in Pennsylvania; 25 species of mussels, including two on the endangered list.
- Main angling species: Walleye, smallmouth bass, musky, northern pike, sucker, carp, bullhead, channel catfish, rock bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, bluegill sunfish, longear sunfish and crappie.
- Commission accesses: Five canoe/small boat access sites—Cambridge Springs, Saegertown, Wilson's Chute (Meadville), Shaw's Landing (Cochrannton) and Utica.
- Commission stocking: Walleyes (750 fry per acre annually); muskies (3 fingerlings per acre biannually). Smallmouth bass sustained naturally.
- Creek records: Walleye—15 pounds, 8 ounces, 1987 by Tom Jones of Meadville. Muskellunge—42 pounds, 8 ounces, 1978 by Ted Fitch of Cambridge Springs.—DB.



Ed Grey caught these two magnificent walleyes, one on December 31, 1987, and the other on January 1, 1988.

photo-Darl Black



A Naturalist's Look at French Creek

"French Creek has a greater diversity of fish species and freshwater clams than any other river in Pennsylvania," says Charles Bier, Associate Director of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Science and Stewardship Department. "If you extended the scope to a list of rivers in eastern North America with the greatest diversity, French Creek would be on that list, too."

One of the missions of the Conservancy is to identify sites in the western half of Pennsylvania that are ecologically significant. Sites may be significant because they support a great diversity of life, they harbor endangered species, or they sustain imperiled natural communities.

"French Creek falls into all these categories," Bier says. "There are 70 species of fish and 25 species of mussels. This is extremely high for a headwater stream in the Ohio drainage."

"Was French Creek the leader in aquatic species diversity 200 years ago? No. The Allegheny and Ohio rivers supported more species. But with dredging, which removes necessary substrate, and damming, which slows the water and creates a layer of silt on the bottom, many of the species have disappeared from the large rivers."

"What remains? French Creek—a small free-flowing, largely unpolluted river. All the things that have happened on the other streams and rivers have not taken place in the French Creek Basin. That is why we believe it is important to keep French Creek a viable ecosystem."

Some people may wonder why so much emphasis is placed on mussels. As a group of organisms, mussels are indicators of the health of a river. Mussels are more sensitive than fish to chronic pollution and habitat changes. French Creek has strong populations of two species of mussels that are on the federal endangered species list—the northern riffleshell and clubshell.

The Conservancy is planning an information program to educate people about the importance of French Creek. It wishes to communicate with people who live and work along the creek, and depend on farms and industries in the watershed for their livelihood.

"First, we would like to help them recognize the significance

of the stream," Bier says. "Many people are proud of French Creek for a variety of reasons—fishing, canoeing, a green space—but they may not understand the significance of diversity. We are eager to work with landowners, local organizations and public agencies to examine ways French Creek can survive as a viable ecosystem into the future."

For more information, contact the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy at 316 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.



Dark Nights and White Flies

by Charles R. Meck

Do you want to extend your fly-fishing season into late summer? Do you want to see great hatches and “spinner” falls in the same evening? Do you want a choice of locations to fish the hatch like southcentral, southeastern or northwestern Pennsylvania? I’ll explain.

For years anglers interested in fishing while clouds of white mayflies covered the two feet just above the surface have journeyed to southcentral Pennsylvania’s Yellow Breeches Creek. They fly fished on this fertile limestone stream just before dark in mid-August to late August. Sure, these fly fishers could have experienced this same unusual hatch on rivers like the Susquehanna, Juniata and Allegheny, but in these larger waters they’d be fly fishing over smallmouth bass rising to the hatch.



Male white fly spinner

For those addicted to fishing for trout while this hatch appeared, though, they had one choice—the Yellow Breeches. Consequently, the Breeches near Allenberry often created a circus-like atmosphere in mid-August when the hatch appeared there. In the special-project water you’re likely to find dozens of anglers lined in the stream waiting for the mayflies to appear just at



Spider-like white fly imitation

dusk. It’s reminiscent of the scene on Penns Creek when the Green Drake appears or opening day on other Commonwealth streams. Anglers crowd the bank in anticipation of the hatch. Most productive stretches of the Breeches are claimed by fly fishers before 7 p.m. Anglers who occupy these beats may wait for an hour or two before the action begins. Once these mayflies appear on the surface of the Yellow Breeches, you can expect to see plenty of rising trout. Once the hatch begins, you can fish it nightly for two to four weeks.

What hatch are we referring to? What mayfly hatch creates a feeding frenzy by trout and a carnival atmosphere by fly fishers searching for the hatch? Many anglers call this peculiar hatch the white fly—others call it the Canadian sailor—entomologists or bug enthusiasts call it *Ephoron leukon*.

Whatever you call it, you quickly discover that the white fly displays many unusual hatching characteristics. Fly fishers can use their knowledge of this short-lived mayfly to their advantage when fishing this intriguing hatch. You also discover that these mayflies often emerge in unbelievable numbers, and that it’s one of the last great hatches of the summer.



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

Until a few years ago, many fly fishers figured the only state trout stream on which they'd encounter a white fly hatch was the Yellow Breeches. That reasoning has changed recently. Nine years ago I visited the Little Juniata River for a late-season try. I knew I'd see some Cream Cahills, so I tied up some size 14 patterns to match this sporadic late-season mayfly. At about 7 p.m., I noticed a few white-colored duns emerging in front of me. But these duns didn't move higher toward the trees that lined the river—they remained about a foot or two above the water's surface and began moving up, then downriver.

Soon some of these newly emerged flies carried trailing pellicles, or the shed dun skins, behind them. These pellicles indicated to me that these insects were white flies and not cream cahills that had emerged.

White flies don't fly to nearby trees and rest for a while—they continue flying and shed their skins in mid-air. Males only change from duns to spinners—females never change but remain as duns throughout the mating and egg-laying ritual. After laying the eggs, the females fall spent on the surface and die. Trout readily take the emerging tan nymph, any procrastinating duns, male spinners, and of course, the dead female duns that have just laid eggs. Trout literally come out of the water chasing emerging duns and white flies hovering near the surface.

Soon dozens of white flies joined the original few that evening on the Little J. Trout a few feet in front of me went crazed and showed their enthusiasm by crashing out of the water chasing newly emerged duns and swarming spinners.

The Cream Cahills I had tied in anticipation of a less-than-concentrated hatch came in handy for this unpredicted wind-fall. I managed to land more than a dozen eager browns that evening. The white fly had made its inaugural appearance to the Little Juniata River.

Since that first hatch that I experienced on the river, I have fished the white fly five to 10 times a year. The hatch usually begins the third week in August and lasts for more than two weeks on the Little Juniata.

But the hatch of white flies isn't limited to the Yellow Breeches and the Little Juniata River. Ask Mike Laskowski of Petroleum Center about the white fly hatch on Oil Creek in north-western Pennsylvania. Mike is president of the Oil Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited. That chapter has completed some worthwhile projects on nearby Little Sandy Creek and plans to pro-

vide more access and help to control sedimentation on Oil Creek. Mike's fly fished over this August hatch for five years.

Several years ago Mike said that during a mid-summer heat wave the hatch appeared on Oil Creek in late July. Mike has seen white flies on Oil Creek from the mouth at Oil City to Titusville. The water temperatures on this stream often rise into the 70s while this hatch appears, and this tempers the importance of the hatch. Mike says you catch almost as many small-mouth bass as trout during the hatch. He describes the white fly on Oil Creek as "super heavy." He says that fly fishers can have a ball with heavy smallmouth bass near the mouth of Oil Creek during the hatch.

Favorite pattern

What's Mike Laskowski's favorite pattern for the white fly hatch on Oil Creek? Mike uses a size 14 White Wulff during the hatch. He says it has produced some hefty trout on the stream.

The adult mayfly usually emerges around the middle of August on the Yellow Breeches and Oil creeks. On the Little Juniata River you find the hatch appearing around the third week in August.

Muddy Creek in York County also holds some white flies. Jan Pickel of New Park first described Muddy Creek's hatch to me. On an early August evening several years ago, he and his son Jacob traveled to the stream and saw hundreds of white flies attracted to the headlights of his car. Jan said that the white fly hatch on Muddy Creek doesn't come close in numbers to the one on the Yellow Breeches, but that trout do feed on the hatch.

Hatches on the Susquehanna River appear in late July. The hatch works its way up the Susquehanna and emerges on the North Branch above Tunkhannock around August 1. White flies appear in great numbers on the river around West Pittston. On occasion authorities have closed the Eighth Street Bridge because so many of these critters have died on the iron structure that it's caused the road to become slippery.

The first mayflies usually appear around 6:30 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. on the Little Juniata. On the Yellow Breeches they seem to appear later. Most of these early flies are males that shed their sub-adult shucks in mid-air. You can distinguish these by recognizing them carrying the shed skins behind them while flying.

Last year I added a white Z-lon shuck to one of my male patterns to imitate this pellicle, or skin. Few trout rise until the heavier hatch appears.

Unusual mayfly

Around 8:15 p.m., thousands of duns appear and trout go crazy chasing emergers into the air. The white fly is one of the few species where the female dun doesn't change to a spinner but mates and drops eggs as a dun. It's also atypical because emergence and egg-laying are completed in one evening.

You as an angler have an opportunity to fish over trout chasing emergers, duns and spinners in one frenzied short evening. By 8:30 p.m., female duns fall spent to the surface after laying their eggs. Trout again go on a feeding frenzy on the spent female duns.

Although the hatch appears in good numbers, it has its disadvantages. Trout often refuse to surface-feed readily until dark. Once they begin, you find surface feeders for a half-hour or more if you can put up with fly fishing in total darkness.

If you fish the hatch on the Yellow Breeches or Little Juniata, you'll find a diversity of patterns. Russ Mowry, of Latrobe, ties one of the best patterns I've used. He ties a size 14 parachute pattern with white spent wings. For the male spinner I add a little reddish-brown poly to the

rear of the body. I never fish the white fly hatch without an ample supply of size 14 tan nymphs.

To extend your enjoyment of fishing over this hatch you should tie up some size 14 tan-colored nymphs. The nymph of the white fly burrows in fairly coarse gravel. Trout readily feed on this burrower when it emerges.

When should you arrive at the stream and which patterns should you use? Action on the white fly hatch usually doesn't begin until 7 p.m. or later. On warm, late-summer evenings the hatch continues well after dark. I've seen some duns appear as early as 6:30 on the Little J. However, you usually see limited surface-feeding until the major hatch near 8 p.m. or almost at dark.

White fly nymph

Bryan Meck and I met on the Breeches this past year in early September. Bryan, Ed Koch and Craig Josephson had fished the hatch the week before. The Yellow Breeches hatch had already appeared for more than three weeks and the number of white

flies had decreased considerably during the past few evenings. Bryan and I had geared up for the hatch by using the bi-cycle. We used a size 14 White Fly pattern, tied parachute-style. We attached a 30-inch piece of 6X tippet, securing it to the bend of the White Fly hook with an improved clinch knot, and attached a weighted size 14 tan nymph to the end of this extension.

Bryan and I wanted to see if Breeches trout actually fed on the nymph when it emerged from the safety of its burrow.

We didn't have to wait long to see if the double rig worked. For every trout we caught on the floating White Fly, we caught four on the tan nymph. The hatch continued past dark and the nearby anglers hated to leave, but Bryan and I left because the last light of this early September evening vanished.

Trout do readily take the nymph during the hatch.

Tactics

What are some tactics for fishing this particular hatch? First, while there's plenty of daylight and the first duns begin emerging but few trout rise, try a tan nymph. Trout might be feeding on the nymph under the surface. When the hatch becomes fairly heavy and trout literally come out of the water chasing emergers, duns and spinners, try using a spider pattern with long hackle. Pick out a trout chasing mayflies and drag the pattern a foot in front

of the feeding fish. Trout often readily strike this pattern.

Toward the end of the hatch and spinner fall, you might want to try using a spent-winged White Fly pattern. Usually action is fast and furious and fly fishers working this hatch and fall have scant time and light to change from one pattern to another. That's why I often use the bi-cycle.

Other streams and rivers in the state hold this hatch. The lower end of Penns Creek, parts of the Delaware and the Raystown Branch of the Juniata harbor hatches. Explore the lower end of some of your favorite streams in August and early September. Examine trout streams that enter the Susquehanna River, Raystown Lake and Allegheny River especially. All these waters hold good white fly populations, so it's not out of the realm of possibilities that some of the trout streams entering these rivers harbor fishable hatches. If you're fortunate enough to find the hatch, you'll enjoy those dark nights and white flies of late summer.



Finding and Catching Big-River Trout

by Linda Steiner

Think of big rivers where they are too wide for a crack pitcher to throw a baseball across, and everyone thinks of warmwater fishing. But big rivers can be the home of big brown trout, the 30-inchers that look like carp until anglers see their spots and their cold, predator eyes.

Of course, fishermen must know where to look for such trout. Between banks, flowing water is not a homogenized sludge, every part equal in temperature, dissolved oxygen, food and cover. Shallows are heated by sunlight, the shadowy depths stay cool. Below rapids the river is oxygen-rich, in sluggish backwaters oxygen-poor but nutrient-filled. Is it any wonder that in that hodge-podge, fish find locations that suit them, whether dark-seeking walleyes, cruising muskellunge, rock-hugging smallmouth bass, fallfish, catfish or carp? Is it so surprising that with so much variety in a big river, trout can occasionally find a place for themselves?

To most fishermen, trout are stream-bred denizens of icy headwater trickles or they are raised in hatcheries and bucketed into cold, slightly larger creeks. On "typical" trout streams, it's rarely difficult for an accomplished spinning rod angler or fly fisherman to cast across the width of the flow from one position. This is the traditional face of Pennsylvania trout fishing, the accepted place where trout are found. Too bad no one told the trout.

Despite what some anglers may wish, trout do not always stay where they are stocked. Their fins are for swimming and some move

on, to be caught miles from the release point, or to find a refuge and grow. Tagging programs generally show mixed results. Some trout hardly budge, and others seem determined to journey upstream until they run out of water, or downstream until they see salt.

Some of these wanderers find their way out of the stocked trout stream into the receiving river below. There they find a



*Some of these wanderer
brown trout find their
way out of stocked trout
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river below. There the
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can tolerate or even
thrive in.*

niche they can tolerate or even thrive in. They remain, on the edge of habitats, in a nook that provides them with the benefits of two worlds, coldwater and warmwater.

Some years ago on a balmy October day, I walked along Tubbs Run in Tionesta with the wife of the trout hatchery superintendent. The lower section of Tubbs Run ran within the hatchery grounds and was closed to fishing as Commission nursery water. The closed section always held trout, escapees, and we threw in a handful of fish food so we could see them. There were some good trout in there, but nothing unusual. We walked to a pool fed by a manmade waterfall, and my companion tossed in a few pellets. There was something in this hole that she wanted me to see.

As lesser fish splashed for food, like a motion picture shark, a huge brown trout swam from the shadows behind the falls. It was football fat, with vivid markings of the autumn spawn. It made one disdainful swing around the pool, no doubt attracted



Is it so surprising that with so much variety in a big river, trout can occasionally find a place for themselves?

by the commotion, nipped at some of the smaller fish, and disappeared behind the falls again.

That fish wasn't a Tubbs Run native. Above the hatchery grounds, Tubbs Run is a brook trout stream, a typical cold, infertile, northern Pennsylvania mountain creek. The average native fish scarcely reach legal size. The big brown trout I saw had obviously traveled upstream from the Allegheny River, which was no more than 100 yards away.

My friend confided that the fish had only appeared recently in the stream pool. To grow that robust, it must have found food elsewhere, a place that had plenty of minnows, crayfish and insects—a place like the big river. But trout are coldwater fish, not suited to river life. Or are they?

It depends on the river, the location within the river, and the trout. Brown trout are the trout. Brown trout are common enough to live in many habitats, able to survive at the threshold of bass and panfish temperatures. In their native Eurasia, they're spread from Iceland to the edge of the Aral Sea and around the Mediterranean, even in Spain and Morocco. Is it any wonder that browns can exist in a Pennsylvania river?

Although brown trout begin to feed readily as water temperatures reach 50 degrees, they are most active in the temperature range of 65 to 75 degrees. This idea might surprise anglers who think trout are frigid-water fish. Browns can even withstand 80-degree water for short periods in the critical summer months, if the water is highly aerated.

Like the brook trout and rainbow trout, the brown trout requires a high percentage of dissolved oxygen in the water it inhabits. At cold temperatures, water retains oxygen well. As water warms, trout had better locate below a riffle, rapids or waterfall to feel comfortable.

Brown trout are particularly suited to life in big rivers. They are not as sensitive to pollution, such as siltation, as the brook trout, and can stand some acidity, not requiring the alkaline conditions the rainbow trout prefers. Brown trout tend to persist in the streams they're stocked in. They're not as gullible as brook trout, and where mostly browns are stocked, it's not unusual for anglers to complain about not being able to catch a limit. But when anglers take a lunker, a veteran of several seasons of fishing pressure, it is almost always a brown trout, and they are happy for the fish's survival savvy.

When brown trout were first introduced to America in the 1880s, anglers quickly learned that the easy catching they'd had with native brook trout was over. Brown trout had been fished for too long in their homeland, and the strains that had persisted had grown wary, selective and tough. Brown trout tend to be nocturnal, especially those big enough to prey on other fish, crayfish, frogs, salamanders, snakes and an occasional mouse. Under the protection of darkness, they are safe from most human and avian predators, can be abroad when their food is most active, and can use the comforting coolness the river gains when the sun is gone.

Add to the brown trout's ability to withstand untrout-like temperatures, a reluctance to be caught, and throw in its night-owl habits and the possibility of journeying downstream from its stocking point, and the stage is set for a big trout in a big river. Trout reach rivers mostly when both the trout stream above and big water below are early-season cold. The seasons produce trout temperatures at some time of the year in all Pennsylvania waters.

Every year a few anglers in the know fish big rivers while they're cool in the spring, at and below the mouth of stocked



Autumn brings cool water and brown trout breeding time. This is when many anglers first discover that big rivers have trout.

trout creeks. After April high water, some fishermen complain, "What happened to the stocked trout?" Other anglers are not asking—they are finding the fish downstream.

Oil Creek drops into the Allegheny River below heavy rapids in Oil City, and each spring anglers wade the creek mouth and catch trout that were stocked miles upstream. This is a scenario that is enacted across the state. As the months march toward summer, river water warms and some trout run back up the cold tributaries.

In summer, most anglers' thoughts turn to bass and other warmwater fish and big rivers are fished for these species. River anglers occasionally hook into big brown trout, especially at night. On the Allegheny, it's not unheard of for browns to be taken by those bank fishing for catfish, wading for bass, or boat fishing for walleyes. What is happening here?

Two things. With coldwater releases from Kinzua Reservoir, the Allegheny is a trout fishery for about five miles below the dam. Downstream from that, the river begins to warm. But how much? Since the dam was built, the upper Allegheny has become more suited to walleyes than to warmth-seeking bass, within the range of brown trout tolerances. Some years, when consistent flows come from the dam, the water is tempered to Tionesta and beyond, reaching only the low-70s.

The upper Delaware is a famous trout fishery, because of the West Branch's chilling releases from New York's Cannonsville Reservoir. The East and warm West Branch join below Hancock, NY, but the river retains its trout stream personality, although gaining size, at least down to the Equinunk-Lordville area. How far down the river the trout water extends depends on the rainfall and reservoir releases in a particular year. Some anglers who chase Delaware River trout report having taken browns at Callicoon and Narrowsburg.

In addition to coldwater releases increasing the range of brown trout in the main body of these two rivers, there are trout-suited, isolated spots farther downstream. Although the bulk of the river may reach 80 degrees, browns are locating thermal refuges. They find in-river spring seeps, position themselves off cold tributaries, loaf in cool, shadowy deeps, and stay below oxygen-producing riffles. They are found especially below the first riffle downstream from the mouth of stocked trout streams, where there is a substantial pool, and they can survive daytime water temperatures.

These browns may not be living in ideal trout conditions, but they are able to make a go of it and more. On summer nights, they foray into the wide river for the plentiful warmwater food, and can retreat to their cold spots if stressed.

Some of the largest big-river browns are caught after dark in July and August. After a hot day, sweat turns to shiver, night things wing overhead, and fish splash and slurp until the next sunrise.

This form of angling is underused, although some practice it on the Delaware, and a scattered few elsewhere. Night trout fishermen seek out a heavy riffle, an entering coldwater tributary, and a deep pool that brown trout can

secret themselves in during the day. Because of the size and eating habits of their quarry, they fling large minnows, minnow-imitation plugs, big streamers and wet flies.

Whether to fish on top or underwater depends on the mood of the fish that evening. If the angler hears surface activity, that's one clue. If not, he's advised to go underneath with his offering.

Autumn brings cool water everywhere and brown trout breeding time. This is when many anglers first discover that big rivers have trout. Like the Tubbs Run fish, lunker browns become visible when they pull to feeder streams to spawn. Fall anglers may be shocked at the size of the trout they catch, out of proportion to the creek, and wonder how the fish grew that big. They need wonder only as far downstream as the river.

As in spring, fall fishermen targeting big-water trout should cast in the river at the mouth of entering streams, and in the lower portion of tributaries.

On most rivers, trout season remains open until the end of February. Delaware River trout cannot be kept after September 30. Because brown trout are so tenacious of life in the wild, catch and release, instead of creeling, makes them available to thrill anglers again. Trophy seekers usually wait for the fish of a lifetime, a near 30-incher, before keeping a wall-hanger.

When fishermen talk, where are they saying they catch big river trout? On the Allegheny there have been reports of trout taken off the mouths of feeder streams as far south as (Big) Sandy Creek and East Sandy Creek in Venango County. On the Delaware, big trout are caught as far downriver as the Lackawaxen. Big Bushkill and Brodhead creeks.

The smallmouth-suited Juniata River and Pine Creek occasionally give up trout in appropriate locations. One angler confided that every fall, at the lower end of Bowman's Creek in Luzerne County, he would see big trout that may have run upstream from the Susquehanna River.

Big-river trout are out of their usual habitat, and many catches of them are incidental. To go after them, to get the brown that's found the right combination of temperature, oxygen and food, an angler must do his homework. Identify likely brown trout holding spots, use a map and a thermometer, obtain access permission, concentrate on night angling with large baits, lures, and flies, be there, and be lucky.



The Damselfly Skater

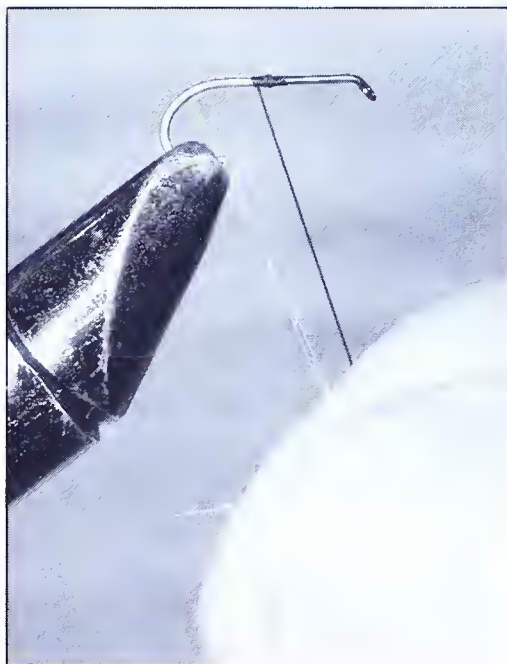


*by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author*

It was a blistering hot afternoon, the kind of day most rational folks choose swimming as their outdoor activity. But because rationality is not one of my more recognizable traits, I chose to slug it out with the trout, regardless of the blazing sun and cloudless sky. Still, the water pressing against my waders felt cool and I reckoned I was as comfortable here as I'd be almost anywhere.

Occasionally, a caddis fly skittered across the surface and an infrequent mayfly lifted from the water to fly to the trees at stream-side. Expectantly, I fished upstream around a normally productive bend, but today the surface was undisturbed by feeding trout. It was almost as if the stream were completely devoid of fish. Even my trusty hopper failed to elicit a response.

Above the bend I sat down on a tussock of grass at the edge of the stream to watch the water for a while. Here the stream is flat, with logs strung along the bank on the opposite side. Idly I watched several black-winged damselflies flitting back and forth between tall weeds at the water's edge. It's easy to become mesmerized by the flight of these graceful insects, but when one flew low over the water near the end of a log, I was abruptly jolted from my reverie. Suddenly, a fine butter-yellow brown trout leaped full-length from the water to intercept it, returning to the surface in a nerve-shattering splash. Why would a trout that previously ignored mayflies and caddis flies suddenly go bananas over a damselfly?



1 Tie in the thread at mid-shank. Select a single strand of Flashabou and tie it in behind the thread tie-in. Wind the strand back to the bend, avoiding overlapping turns.



2 Reverse direction and wind the Flashabou over the first layer, tying it off at the thread tie-in. Trim the excess.



3 Tie in one hackle, dull side toward the eye, at the fore end of the body and at a right angle to the shank. Leaving a small space in front of the first hackle, tie in the second hackle with the dull side toward the bend.

My mind flashed back to the penitentiary stretch of Spring Creek, where I had seen a large brown trout perform a similar maneuver many years ago, and more recently, another on Penn's Creek. I think we fly fishers sometimes focus our attention so intensely on the more familiar mayflies, caddis flies and stoneflies that we tend to overlook the importance of the large flies of the order Odonata—the common damselflies and dragonflies that also frequent our trout streams.

Flushed with the prospect of some interesting fishing after a slow beginning, I rummage through my fly box until I came to a compartment filled with skaters. I chose one with long black hackles and knotted it to my leader. Then I began casting to the logs and twitching the fly back toward me in short spurts. When the fly reached the end of a log it disappeared in a mighty swirl. The leader stretched taut but after a brief play the line went slack. I reeled in to see if I still had a fly at the end of my leader, and confirming it was still there, continued to work my way upstream. I concentrated on the edges of the stream, particularly around cover, and in eddies behind obstructions.

Virtually every likely spot held a trout and they responded in exciting fashion. By day's end I had caught and released a very respectable number of trout, several of which were particularly handsome specimens. The event was all the more stimulating, considering there had been

no indication of surface-feeding whatsoever. It had been a typical hot-weather "dog day" and the trout had to be stirred out of their lethargy.

Skaters were developed by the late Edward R. Hewitt, who used them with devastating effect at his camp on the Neversink River in the Catskills. These flies are dressed with extremely long-fibered stiff hackles, often with a diameter approximating a silver dollar. The hackles are wound near midshank and tails are omitted. Bodies are often omitted, too, although some tiers dress thin bodies on these flies. Hewitt tied his skaters on size 16 dry fly hooks, the smallest hooks he thought were capable of holding large trout. I was skeptical when I first saw a skater. The discrepancy between hook and hackle sizes appeared too extreme. Besides, without tails, what was to prevent the fly from floating on its backside? Shortly afterward, my doubts vanished when I watched a friend fish skaters on the Lackawaxen, in northeast Pennsylvania. First, Russ dressed his skaters with shorter hackles than Mr. Hewitt specified—closer to the diameter of a quarter than a silver dollar—and they worked very well, indeed. And although Russ' skater would occasionally alight flat on the water, a subtle twitch of the line made it jump upright, dig its toes into the surface film and float as a dry fly should.

The Damselfly Skater represents the common Bluethroat, a damselfly with wide

distribution nationwide. The pattern uses a thin body consisting of a single strand of pearlescent Flashabou, wrapped fore and aft of the hackle. On examining a packet of pearlescent Flashabou, you find that the strands vary subtly in hue. Select an iridescent blue-green strand to match the metallic tint of the naturals.

In recent years I have been dressing skaters on size 14 hooks instead of 16s and find that hooking efficiency is improved. However, hooks of fine wire should be selected to preserve the pattern's ability to float. The hackles are positioned slightly forward of mid-shank and are tied in with dull sides facing each other. Once wound, they are pressed tightly against each other, a procedure that stiffens the spines of the hackles and ensures they will hold up under the stress of agitating the fly on the surface.

Edward Hewitt's first skaters were dressed to suggest whitish butterflies that fly low over the water and often spur activity from trout. Damselflies may generate similar action and every fly box should include patterns to meet this possibility. I don't use the Damselfly Skater as an everyday fly (as one would use an Adams) but it has been a valuable pattern on slow days when trout need some prodding. It's exciting fishing, too. Trout often leap over the fly like porpoises, sometimes nailing the fly but often missing it altogether. Either way, it's a brand of fly fishing that keeps the adrenalin flowing.



4 With the rear hackle, tie it off and trim the excess hackle tip. Repeat with the front hackle.



5 With the edges of your fingernails, press the wound hackles together.

Dressing: Damselfly Skater

Hook: Size 14 regular shank, fine wire.

Thread: 6/0 black prewaxed.

Body: Single strand of pearlescent Flashabou with blue-green hue.

Hackle: Black or dark dun, with barbs as long as 2 1/2 to 3 times the hook gape.



6 Tie in the Flashabou in front of the hackle and wrap the thorax area, one layer only. Tie off behind the eye, trim the excess and whip-finish.

Lake Wallenpaupack 13 Miles of Variety

by Tom Fegely





photo: Betty Lou Fegely

Looking for fishing variety? Consider Lake Wallenpaupack. From its deep-running trout and walleye to rock-dwelling smallmouth, weedbed largemouth and a smorgasbord of panfish, Wallenpaupack has it all—and more, including its newest resident, the striped bass.

Having once been a regular on the resort lake, it had been a few years between visits when I accepted the invitation of Greg Walsh of Scranton, a well-known area bass angler, to join him for an evening of striper fishing.

Although I'd caught stripers at Raystown, I wanted to sample the Wallenpaupack version of the sport.

"Just before dark they ought to be hitting," Walsh commented as we enjoyed a leisurely late-afternoon meal. "How about if we try for a few smallmouths in the meantime?"

After launching his bass boat at Mangan Cove, we motored across the lake where a series of boat docks, "boatless" as of our May trip, joined the calm shoreline. After catching a dozen smallies and a number of predictable rock bass, Walsh squinted into the sun and across the calm surface.

"They're up," he announced, spotting ripples on the flat water.

Throttling to the far shore, Walsh tossed his 5 1/2-inch silver-and-blue Rebel while I still fumbled with a Rat-L-Trap. Winding the sinking lure back with vehement jerks of his stiff rod, Walsh made a second cast to the same spot. No sooner had it dented the surface than the rod arched and the first striper of the evening was hooked.

As it flopped next to the boat, I scooped it into the net, admired the 5-pound hybrid, and returned it to bite and fight again following a brief photo session.

"Ripping" is a popular technique for enticing the attention of the stripers, which often go into feeding frenzies in May as the lake's numerous alewives hit the shoreline to spawn. Walsh says that fish chase the lure and hit when the bait slows.

Striper anglers have learned to score with a variety of lures and even live bait, specifically herring. Some stripers are even caught by ice anglers during freeze-up.

The author shows a nice smallmouth bass. A black-on-black jig-and-pig, chartreuse or white spinnerbait, and a variety of crankbaits, jerkbaits and surface lures are best for tempting Wallenpaupack's smallies. The lake's rocky habitat is best suited to smallmouths. Calm mornings and evenings are the best times. Fall fishing is good because cooling water triggers renewed fish activity.

Indeed, bass tournament anglers were the first to catch the line-sided rockfish, but in the past half-dozen years many have become expert at taking what may be the lake's second most popular gamefish—after smallmouth bass.

Set in the heart of vacation country and within a half-day's drive of the Northeast's most densely populated cities and suburbs, it's the focal point of campers, boaters, sailers, waterskiers, and of course, anglers.

Labor Day weekend signals the welcome arrival of a more placid Wallenpaupack, known for the many boaters who hit the lake during the warm months.

"When school resumes things change drastically," said lake superintendent David Lamberton. "Until Labor Day (anglers) stick to weekdays and evenings, but from September to the middle of June it's a different lake."

Surveys show that nearly 80 percent of all boats launched at Wallenpaupack do so to fish. But that fact isn't obvious in the heat of the summer when boat traffic, particularly on weekends, calls for extra patrols by Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission officers. Small-boat anglers, in particular, are advised to use extreme caution in travels across the lake, which spans two miles at its widest point.

Some anglers avoid Wallenpaupack entirely in summer, choosing instead the many smaller lakes within a short drive. Others adapt their fishing schedules.

"In summer I don't even bother going out during the day," said Ed Townsend, a retired area resident and bass tournament angler. "Late-day and after-dark fishing picks up when it gets quiet."

But all that changes with autumn's arrival when the 5,700-acre impoundment becomes more subdued. The cooling waters also signal the start of renewed fishing activity—and success.

While bass anglers continue to hold weekly tournaments, the lake's newest residents are also drawing considerable attention.

"There's plenty of interest in stripers," according to Mark

Strasser of the Wallenpaupack Sports Shop, set near the northern tip of the lake. "Fishing for them picks up at the beginning of October and continues right up to first ice."

The same is true for walleyes and trout.

The vast, deep lake, lapping 52 miles of shoreline, retains heat longer than other smaller Pocono Mountain lakes. In most years safe ice doesn't form until January. This year the ice lingered well into March.

Wallenpaupack's depths reach 20 to 60 feet in many places, making a depthfinder helpful when going after walleyes and the big brown and rainbow trout dwelling on or near the rocky bottom. The state record brownie, weighing 17 pounds, 12 ounces—was caught here in 1988.

Three years ago the Commission began releases of the European Seeforellen brown trout, which have the potential of growing to 45 pounds or more, according to Lamberton. Browns and rainbows have been long-time favorites of Wallenpaupack regulars, although catching these fish requires deep-down trolling and downrigging much of the year.

Strasser said in the spring and fall you can find the trout and walleye in the shoreline shallows where they can be taken on trolled plugs or by drifting live herring—a bait that became popular with the advent of striper fishing.

Area tackle shops sell the 4-inch to 6-inch baitfish, which are hooked under the dorsal fin and drifted. The after-dark hours are most productive for deep-water trout, which linger anywhere from 20 to 25 feet in the warm months.

In spring the trout travel the shorelines and lunkers are regularly caught by anglers casting from shore or from docks.

For walleyes, Strasser recommends trolling or casting the Ripplin' Redfin, the Bomber Long A or any of the minnow-imitators. The resort lake is best fished at night, particularly for glass-eyes, which prefer nighttime to move near shore and feed.

Even though stripers can be caught anytime, April and October are considered prime months for catching the schooling fish up top. In spring, the spawning alewives gathering along the shoreline bring vast schools to feed. From an hour before dark throughout the night the predator rockfish hit, and some anglers spend dusk to dawn seeking them.

The same artificials that entice walleyes are also used by striper anglers, usually in larger sizes. The Ripplin' Redfin is arguably the top artificial choice, but Rat-L-Traps, white spinnerbaits, white bucktail jigs embellished with red plastic worms, and other big lures are also used.

The "secret" is to imitate the silvery color of the alewives.

"The lake is overrun with alewives," Commission biologist Dan Bourke says. "Stripers eat shiners and ciscoes, too, but it's the alewife that's most important to them."

The big, deep pools near the breast of the dam, Shuman Point, and the pool off the dike (at the junction of Routes 507 and 6)

are considered prime striper waters.

Wallenpaupack holds both purebred and hybrid stripers. The former were first stocked as fingerlings in 1984 and 1985 with hybrids released each year ever since, according to Lamberton. An average of 30,000 fingerlings are stocked annually, maintaining healthy year-class populations.

Strasser weighed in a 23-pound, 6-ounce striper in 1992 during a fishing contest, and last spring a 27-pound, 9-ounce catch was documented by another tackle shop.

Biologists are pleased with the growth rates of the 4- to 6-inch fingerlings. Studies show that the lake's purebreds reach 26 inches after five years. The hybrids grow to a maximum weight of 12 to 13 pounds.

Some anglers have also taken to free-lining live herring for stripers with considerable success. Even though stripers can be caught this month and occasional schools splash the surface, the nomadic schools aren't as predictable as they are during April, early May and October.

Black basses

The black basses have long been Wallenpaupack's favored prey, and for today's anglers it's no exception. I recall making my first trip to Wallenpaupack about 1955. I also remember catching what was the biggest bass of my life at that time—a largemouth weighing about two pounds that hit a nightcrawler strung beneath a bobber.

Today's most productive baits are a bit more sophisticated.

"Give me one choice and I'll use a jig-and-pig," says Townsend, who spends many evenings on his bass boat at Wallenpaupack. "I prefer black on black—an eighth-ounce black deer hair jig and black pork."

He shifts to white or chartreuse spinnerbaits at times, and on calm mornings and evenings likes

topwater baits including the Slug-Go and various jerk baits.

Doug Siska, a professional guide, agrees with Townsend's choices. "You can catch bass on top anytime it's calm," says Siska.

He lists his top Wallenpaupack selections as plastic topwater lures such as the Slug-Go, jig-and-pig, large white or chartreuse spinnerbaits with No. 4 or 5 blades, jerkbaits and crankbaits.

"When I fish a bass tournament at Wallenpaupack, I show up with a small tackle box because I know what they'll hit," Siska says. "Everybody else brings several boxes packed with lures, but you don't need a great variety."

Wallenpaupack and its rocky habitat is best suited to numerous smallmouth bass but specific areas also hold sizable largemouths.

"Anyone can find the grassy and brushy areas," says Townsend. "You won't find largemouths everywhere in the lake—you have to search them out."

Siska says only about "5 out of 100" of the catches he and his clients hook are largemouths. One of the "minority" was





Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike and Wayne counties

a 7 1/2-pounder, his biggest Wallenpaupack largemouth bass. “(Wallenpaupack) is very much a smallmouth lake,” he’s learned.

“Unlike largemouths, they’re all over the place.”

Panfishermen also know Wallenpaupack’s reputation for yellow perch from fall through ice fishing season and into spring.

Perch is the most popular panfish, according to Strasser, with 15-inch catches not uncommon. Small live minnow baits and action-tailed jigs are the most widely used lures.

The perch is Lamberton’s favorite prey. “I use live fathead minnows or a grub or leech,” Lamberton says. “Nemanie Point and Calico Point are hotspots along with the place where Aerial Creek runs into the lake. But perch can be caught just about anywhere in the lake.”

Big perch are also the main focus of ice fishermen, particularly during late ice, when 12- to 16-inchers are caught on maggot-baited jigs and tipup-rigged shiners.

Although not as well-known, Wallenpaupack also yields large crappies with the May spawning period the most productive time. Rock bass are also often caught on smallmouth bass baits because they inhabit the same submerged rock structure. Bluegills and a variety of sunfish round out the panfish selection. Bottom-fishing also yields bullheads and large channel catfish.

Four islands—Cairns Point, Burns, Kipp and Epply—dot the lake and provide good catches along their points and dropoffs.

For most of the year, boat-anglers can also navigate Wallenpaupack Creek, which flows into the lake at its southwestern end. Lamberton says that boat anglers can motor as far as two miles upstream from the Ledgesdale area, which holds excellent trout and smallmouth bass.

Stripers and bass, walleyes and trout aside, Wallenpaupack’s shoreline rocks and numerous docks also offer kids and novices the chance to catch fish, with an occasional lunker as a bonus. Rock bass, in particular, are cooperative on both small plugs and spinners and live bait.

Local Indians named Wallenpaupack, interpreted as “the stream of swift and slow water.” That was long before the hydroelectric dam was constructed in 1926.

Today, Lake Wallenpaupack lures thousands of visitors for every conceivable type of water activity. But to youngsters and oldsters alike, this biggest of northeastern Pennsylvania lakes continues to offer excellent and varied angling opportunities.



Lake Wallenpaupack Profile

Lake Wallenpaupack is one of the few eastern waters with unlimited horsepower regulations. On any given day from spring through fall, anglers encounter bass boats, catamarans, canoes, houseboats, sailboats, ski boats and cruisers. Many boats pull waterskiers, adding to the confusion.

The lake is owned and managed by the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company (PP&L), which operates four lakeside campgrounds at Caffrey, Ironwood point, Ledgesdale and Wilsonville. The latter is the largest campground with 160 tent, trailer and motorhome sites immediately off Route 6 near the dam.

Each campground also has a boat launch, but the busiest access is located at the northernmost end of the lake, along Route 590 at Mangan Cove. There’s no charge for launching from the modern ramp and parking lot, developed jointly by PP&L and the Fish & Boat Commission.

A \$5 fee is charged for launching at the campgrounds with the launch fee waived for campers.

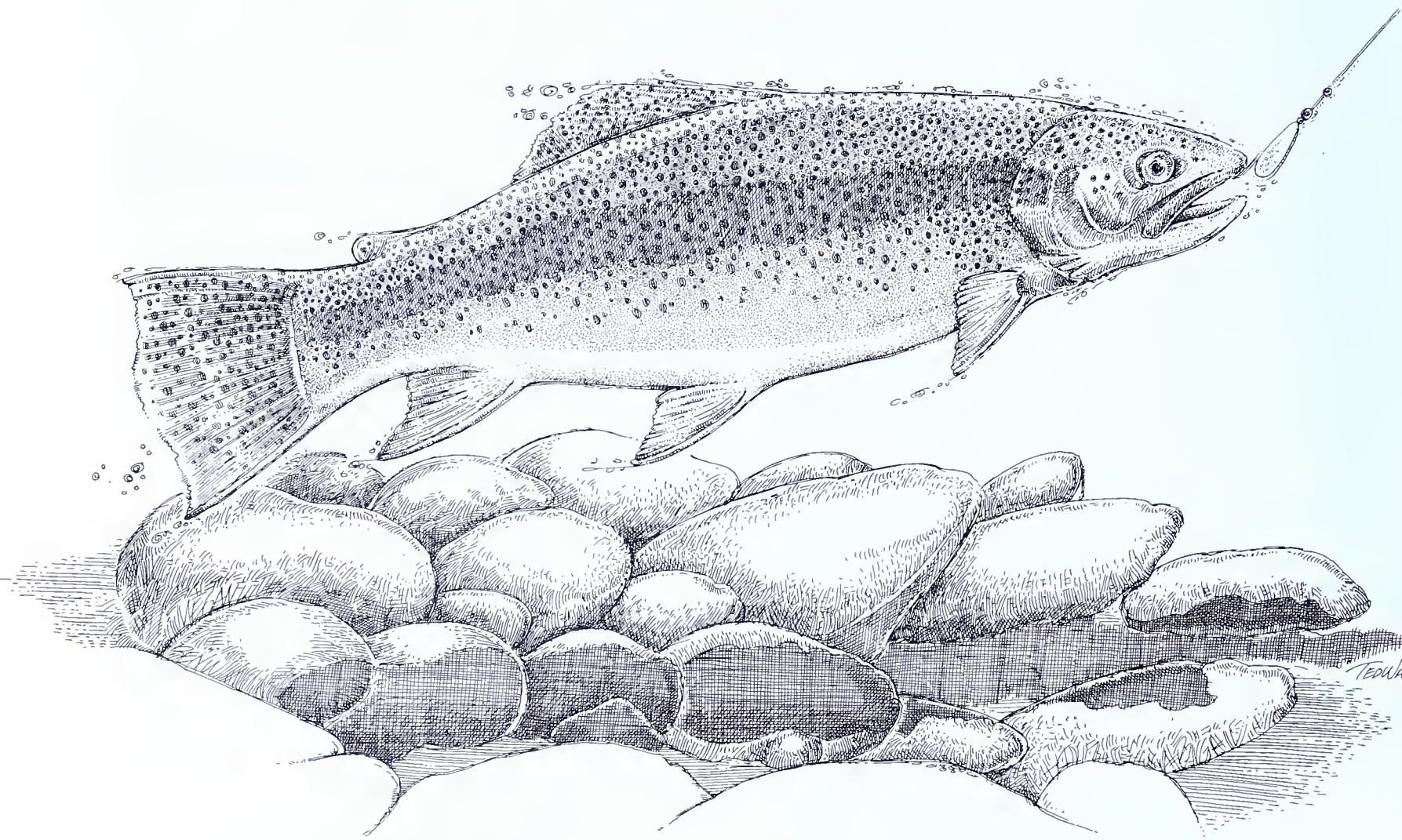
The four islands in the lake are heavily used for picnicking in summer, although I’ve visited them in May and October and more often than not had sole use. The islands offer a welcome break for anglers to cook their catches. Each has grills and tables for boat-in use.

For additional information on camping opportunities and boating regulations, contact: Lake Wallenpaupack Superintendent, Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, Box 122, Hawley, PA 18428-0122. Phone: (717) 424-6050.

For information on fishing, lodging and private campgrounds in the region, write to: Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, Box K, 1004 Main Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360. Phone: 1-(800) POCONOS.—TF.

FLOAT *the Middle Allegheny* FOR TROUT

by Mike Bleech



"Look at that!"

"Look at that!"

Worth Hammond said.

His hands were busy with his fishing rod and reel, so he pointed with his nose at the two-foot palomino trout that was following his lure.

Like most of the trout had done that late-summer afternoon, the palomino just followed. It was the second palomino we had seen. The rest were a mix of normal rainbow trout and brown trout. A few had actually bumped our lures. But only a couple had felt our hooks.

The most enlightening part of that particular float trip was the number of trout we saw—not the number we caught. Beginning at the Fish & Boat Commission access at Starbrick, we saw trout in nearly every riffle downriver 10 miles to our take-out point.

Many anglers believe that the only good trout fishing in the middle Allegheny is in the Kinzua Dam tailwaters. Even local anglers seldom consider the river below Warren as good trout water. But trout fishing is actually very good for at least 15 miles downriver from the dam, and at selected places much farther downriver, at least to West Hickory.

Before construction of the Kinzua Dam in the mid-1960s, trout fishing was very spotty in the river below the old village of Kinzua. Now the Kinzua Dam does a few things to create a trout fishery. First, it stops all upriver migration of trout, and they gather in the tailwaters. Second, the tailwaters provide excellent trout habitat, with well-oxygenated water, and an ample food supply of small fish washed through the gates. Third, the dam acts as a sump, effectively clearing and cleaning the water. As has been the case at numerous dams, a trout fishery developed not just in the tailwaters, but also for several miles downriver.

For the first few years the middle Allegheny trout fishery was fed by stocking in tributary streams, and some natural reproduction. Several small Allegheny River tributary streams are high-quality trout water supporting reproducing populations of brook, brown and rainbow trout. This is noteworthy because very few Pennsylvania streams support rainbow trout reproduction.

Then, brown trout were the mainstay of the fishery. Later, surplus rainbow trout from the Allegheny National Fish Hatchery, which is located at the Kinzua Dam, were stocked into the river. But for the time being, at least, that hatchery no longer raises rainbows.

Now, the Fish & Boat Commission stocks fingerling brown and rainbow trout. This stocking has spread the trout fishery out more. It is most apparent downriver from Warren, where the trout fishing has improved a lot since the fingerling program began.

The middle Allegheny, that stretch from the Kinzua Dam to the head of the navigation pools, roughly near I-80, is a very popular place for float trips. Surprisingly few trout anglers float-fish this water, though.

The first floating stretch is from the Kinzua Dam to the city of Warren. This is clearly the most popular part of the middle Allegheny for trout fishing. A boat launch on the Route 59 side of the tailwaters is suitable for cartop or light trailer boats.

Two access areas in Warren are suitable only for hand loading. One is at the upriver point where Conewango Creek empties into the river. The other is at Betts Park, on the downriver end of Warren.

River flow from the dam to Warren is completely, for practical purposes, controlled by outflow from the gates of the dam. During summer, outflow from the dam is often less than 1,500 cfs (cubic feet per second). While the flow is this low, you can expect to drag the bottom in the shallower riffles even in canoes and other shallow-draft boats. You might find it best to walk your craft through some riffles.

The current drifts you quickly past the good trout holding water, so you might want to get out of your craft or set an anchor. Another option is a drag anchor. Several years ago during a drift from the dam, my fishing partner found a truck coil spring on the river bottom. I have been using that spring as a drag anchor ever since. It slows the boat enough to allow me several more casts in the better water, yet it seldom snags the bottom.

A drift from the dam to the point, in Warren, takes less than a half-day if you drift with the current through the riffles and then paddle or motor through the pools. You can easily make that a long half-day by lingering in the better water.

The distance is about 8 miles from the dam to the point. The access at Betts Park is another 3 miles downriver. The Fish & Boat Commission access at Starbrick is 13 miles from the dam, and the boat launch at Buckaloons Campground is 2.5 miles from there.

The 15-mile float from the boat launch at the dam to the Buckaloons boat launch makes for a full day of fishing. You can stop for shore lunch at the point. Or you can buy your lunch within a very short walk at Brown Run, near the bridge at the upriver end of Warren, or a few hundred yards up Conewango Creek.

The Commission stocks fingerling brown and rainbow trout. This stocking has spread the trout fishery out more. It is most apparent downriver from Warren, where the trout fishing has improved a lot since the fingerling program began.

I recall one blistering hot day last summer. The morning started off cool enough under a layer of fog. We caught trout about as fast as we could get our lures into the water in the riffles around Dixon and Harmon islands. But the fog lifted while we drifted alongside Harmon Island. Within an hour we were baking in the sun.

Fortunately we had sunscreen and long-sleeve shirts that we took off only long enough to soak them in the river water. Sweat poured through my eyes so much that I frequently had to splash water on my face.

As we approached the Route 6 bridge I steered the boat toward the south shore. When we got to the mouth of Brown Run, I pulled hard to get out of the current and into the slack water.

The slack water near the mouth of Brown Run was deep enough for me to row most of the way to a take-out food stop at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 59. Trees hung over this small trout stream providing shade relief. Then a few tall milk shakes fortified our energy.

The middle Allegheny, the stretch from Kinzua Dam to the head of the navigation pools, roughly near I-80, is popular for float trips. Surprisingly few trout anglers float-fish this water.

I guarantee those milk shakes sure hit the spot!

Downriver from Warren a river floater is out of reach of such conveniences all the way to Tidioute.

Another of my favorite floats is from the Buckaloons to Conklin Run, a distance of about 7.75 miles. About 25 yards upriver from the mouth of the little "crick" is a nice place to pull canoes. Adjacent is a pull-off large enough to park three or four vehicles. Access to this area is by way of a long dirt road. The only problem about pulling out at Conklin Run is that you could easily pass the place without noticing. The stream passes beneath an old railroad bridge close to the river. That bridge is my marker. You can see it, but not without looking for it.

Few anglers fish for trout in this stretch of the river. The trout, or the concentrations of trout, are farther apart here than upriver from Warren, because the pools are longer. The river is bigger, too, with the donations from Conewango and Brokenstraw creeks.

A thermometer might tell you that this is not trout water during mid-summer to late summer. But the river bottom contains numerous cold springs. I can tell you that from experience. I spent much of the time during my early teenage years on this part of the river. We found those cold springs everywhere we swam.

Stop when you catch a trout. More are almost certainly nearby.

Tackle, tactics

Tackle and tactics for river trout are much like the strategies on smaller trout streams, though on a bigger scale. Before fingerlings were stocked, few small trout were caught. Now that fingerlings are stocked in the river, smaller trout are abundant. Nonetheless, most anglers target larger trout here.

As any experienced trout angler knows, big trout are every bit as fussy about line as small trout, and probably more so. You will get far more hits on 6-pound line than on 10-pound line. But of course, all 6-pound lines are not equal. Pick a premium small-diameter line for best results. I prefer a low-visibility green line.

Boating big trout on light line is challenging. Serious river trout anglers have learned that long, light-power rods are best for this job. The long rods offer a few other advantages. They improve casting distance, and they keep line off the water. Casting distance is not very important while fishing from a boat. Keeping line off the water is a big advantage, though, because this reduces bow in the line, and it decreases the effects of water dragging the line.

Most lures you might use for small-stream trout catch Allegheny River trout. This is where you might want to scale up, though, to target larger trout. Instead of lures that are an inch or two long, try lures in the 3-inch to 5-inch range.

The most popular artificial spinning lures for Allegheny River trout are Rapala minnows and white action-tailed jigs. Spoons and other similar lures also work fine. Experimenting with various colors often pays dividends.

Local information

You can get useful local information, such as places to eat or sleep, by contacting Travel Northern Alleghenies, P.O. Box 804, Warren, PA 16365; or phone (814) 726-1222.

The better trout water in the middle Allegheny flows along the western border of the Allegheny National Forest. Seven islands, four between Buckaloons and Tidioute, make up the Allegheny Islands Wilderness. Low-impact camping is allowed on these islands. The U.S. Forest Service also operates a campground at Buckaloons Recreation Area. For information about these places, and about canoeing in the Allegheny National Forest, write to: Allegheny National Forest, P.O. Box 847, Warren, PA 16365.

Local tackle shops carry topographic maps. I suggest the Warren County map, which shows this entire stretch of river in detail.

Canoes can be rented along the river. Shuttle service is available. Try these outfitters: Allegheny Outfitters in Warren, phone, 814-723-1203; Indian Waters Canoe Rentals in Tidioute, phone, 814-484-3252; Eagle Rock Motel in Tionesta, phone, 814-755-4444.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates a fishing and water information hotline. That number is (814) 726-0164. Listen for the discharge from the dam, which tells you how the river is flowing. The river is floatable when the outflow is less than 1,500 cfs, but you will scrape the bottom a lot. From 1,500 cfs to 4,000 cfs is perfect. The river becomes uncomfortable when the outflow is more than 6,000 cfs.

When you contact any source of local information, ask for specific information. Have a list of questions before telephoning. Tell them you will be float-fishing for trout on the middle Allegheny River.

Pennsylvania
ANGLER

Float Tips

- Shallow-draft, hand-launchable craft are best suited to float fishing the Allegheny River. During normal summer river flow it is impossible to avoid places in the riffles that are less than 6 inches deep. Canoes are fine, though stable john boats are better fishing craft.
- Some anglers use jet boats, which can get up through the shallow riffles. However, these boats tend to draft too much water while they are drifting, because of their heavy motors.
- The middle Allegheny is a rocky river. Even in the deeper pools you encounter boulders close to the surface. If you are unfamiliar with the water, avoid motoring fast.
- If you encounter muddy water downriver from Warren, you can often get away from the dirty water by floating between the dam and Conewango Creek.
- When the outflow from Kinzua Dam is less than 1,500 cfs, be prepared to step out of your boat or canoe from time to time, to get it through shallow riffles.—MB.

Fly Fishing the Middle Allegheny

For some tips on fly fishing in the middle Allegheny River I spoke with Bill Jeffers, a Warren angler who admits that his river trout fishing sometimes borders on obsessive.

"I do most of my fly fishing in May, June and July," Bill says.

Tremendous insect hatches come off the river during these months. Most are caddis flies, but there are also big mayfly hatches and some stone flies.

"It looks like it's snowing sometimes, there are so many coming off in May," Bill says.

A couple of dry flies Bill relies on for the river are the light and dark Elk Hair Caddis, in the 12 to 16 size range. The Light Cahill and the March Brown are also local favorites.

"You just have to watch what hatch is there, and use it," Bill advises.

One of the more impressive hatches is a white mayfly hatch that occurs on several Pennsylvania rivers. Bill uses a size 12 Light Cahill to match this hatch. It occurs during late May and June. Look for it at the tail ends of pools, Bill suggests. It is more common downriver from Warren.

Anglers can often be confused when more than one insect is hatching, a common occurrence on the river. Sometimes the solution to this problem is fishing dry flies as wets, just under the surface film.

"In September and October, I start looking at streamers," Bill says.

His favorite streamer patterns are the Black Ghost and the Muddler Minnow. But he seldom ties them exactly as the patterns specify. Usually Bill alters the streamers to look more like indigenous forage fish such as emerald shiners.

"Tie 'em big," Bill urges. "Look for the big trout!"

photo-Jeri Blech



photo-Doug Stamm

Quality 6-pound-test line and long, light-powered rods are the ticket to success. Try lures that are 3 to 5 inches long. At right, the Starbrick Access, on Route 6 in the town of Starbrick.



MON'S MIXED BAG

by Jeff Knapp



photo-Jeff Knapp

Western Pennsylvania's three major rivers—the Allegheny, Ohio and Monongahela—have undergone a renaissance over the past decade or two, recovering from the ills of a past's industrial and municipal pollution.

The first time I fished the Monogahela River was with Bill Johnson, one of the Mon's most experienced anglers. It was a blustery October day, one that promised more in the way of difficult fishing conditions than a fair chance to sample the Mon's sport. Johnson wasn't overly optimistic as we slipped his boat into the river at the Fish & Boat Commission Speers Access.

Despite the tough circumstances, the fishing was good throughout the day. The action started with saugers. Then we found some smallmouth bass. Channel catfish followed. We ended the afternoon with a flurry of strikes from a mixed school of white bass and hybrid stripers (white bass x striped bass cross).

I can't recall how many fish Bill and I caught that day, but there weren't many lulls in the action. I was impressed with the Mon's variety of gamefish.

Mon River medicine: Counterclockwise from top left are a Renosky Super Shad, a Berkley Power Grub on a ball-head jig, another Power Grub, and a quarter-ounce jighead.

Western Pennsylvania's three major rivers—the Allegheny, Ohio and Monongahela—have undergone a renaissance over the past decade or two, recovering from the ills of a past's industrial and municipal pollution. Water quality problems continue on the Mon, enough to limit the fishery a bit more than that found in the Allegheny or even in the Ohio, but the Mon is healthy enough to provide excellent fishing opportunities.

The Monongahela River is formed in West Virginia by the merging of the Tygart Valley River and West Fork River near Fairmont, West Virginia. The Mon enters the Commonwealth near Point Marion. It flows 91 miles from the state line to The Point in downtown Pittsburgh, where it joins the Allegheny to form the Ohio River. Along the way, six systems of locks and dams impound the Mon's flow.

Charleroi-based outdoors writer John Mahn has witnessed the turnaround of the Mon River. "In the early 1970s, the river was carp and catfish, mostly bullheads," Mahn says. "In the mid- to late 1970s, when the steel business started to decline and environmental regulations began to tighten, water quality improved greatly.

"The smallmouth bass fishing picked up first. The smallmouths that had been in the creeks started to make their way into the river. As the river became cleaner, walleyes and saugers made their way up from the Ohio River. Later, in the 1980s, the Fish & Boat Commission began stocking hybrid muskies and hybrid striped bass. The Mon's gone full circle."

According to Mahn, the river, which has benefited from the shutdown of the Mon Valley steel industry, may now help the economic conditions of the area.

"The local governments are now looking at the river as a great source of recreation, a revitalization for the area," says Mahn.

Fish & Boat Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson also views the Monogahela as a valuable asset. "The Monongahela is on a comeback, just like the Allegheny and Ohio rivers," says Lorson. "But one thing we have to keep in mind is that the Mon was degraded more than the Allegheny and the Ohio. These difficulties include acid mine drainage, industrial pollution and



sewage. It has returned in terms of water quality, but there are still some problems in that watershed."

The Cheat River, a substantial waterway that flows into the Mon near Point Marion, brings with it plenty of acid mine drainage. Lorson says the water quality in the Mon improves the closer you get to Pittsburgh. The Youghiogheny River's flow, which enters the Mon in McKeesport, helps significantly to improve the Mon's water quality.

Though the Mon still isn't as productive as the Allegheny or Ohio, Lorson doesn't underplay the significance of the "new" Monongahela River. "We do have a viable fishery in those waters," Lorson says. "It's always enjoyable for me to talk to some of the fellows that have been around the river for 50 years or so. They really show the excitement over the changes in the river—how much fun they're having fishing there."

According to Lorson, the primary species in the Mon are smallmouth bass, saugers, white bass, walleyes, channel catfish and carp. Because of the Mon's lower gradient, and larger, more lake-like pools (areas between dams), the river holds some warmwater species. These fishes include largemouth bass, bluegills, rock bass, crappies, and a few spotted bass.

Two of the more important angling elements on the Mon are the tailrace areas and feeder streams. Both tend to concentrate baitfish and gamefish. Other significant fish attractors are weedbeds, pilings, loading docks and piers, bridge pilings and other forms of manmade structure.

Here's a quick pool-by-pool breakdown of some of the better areas of the Monongahela River, as provided by AFM Lorson: **Pool 7 (from L&D 7 upriver to the state line).** Water quality in this part of the Mon is likely the worst found within any stretch of Pennsylvania's portion of the river. Much acid mine drainage coming in from the Cheat River, and industrial and acid mine drainage from the upper Mon, limits the fishing. Lorson says there is a marginal fishery for saugers, white bass and smallmouth bass.

During electrofishing surveys conducted during the fall of 1990, Lorson found 11 species of fish below the Point Marion L&D.

Maxwell Pool (from Maxwell L&D upriver to L&D 7). Two clean tributaries enter the Mon within this pool—Whitely Creek and Ten Mile Creek. Ten Mile Creek is the largest of the two, and it is navigable for about a mile from the river mouth.

In addition to the better water quality found within these streams, many species "run" up these tributaries during spring spawning migrations, particularly white bass. It's one of the better times for shore-bound anglers to get a shot at these river fish. **Pool 4 (from L&D 4 at Charleroi upriver to Maxwell L&D).** Thanks in part to the cleaner water of Ten Mile Creek (which



More Mon River medicine: Left to right are a ballhead jig, a fathead jig and a grub body, and a plain fathead jig.

photos-Jeff Knapp

MON'S MIXED BAG



is located just above Maxwell Dam), the fishing begins to pick up in this pool. The Maxwell Dam tailrace is one of the better spots.

Many tributaries enter the Mon along this stretch, but the water quality of some is marginal. Still, they often get spring runs of fish when water flows are up.

One of the better tributaries is Dunlap Creek, located below Brownsville. Another is Pike Run, which is near Coal Center. **Pool 3 (from L&D 3 at Elizabeth upriver to L&D 4).** Pigeon Creek and Mingo Creek are the two better tributaries that enter Pool 3. Pigeon Creek is just upriver of the town of Monongahela. Mingo Creek is slightly downriver of the same town.

Just downriver from L&D 4 are the remnants of an old lock

and dam. The structure here is attractive to many types of gamefish.

Two power plants are located within this pool. Duquesne Light has a plant at Elrama, and West Penn Power's Mitchell Plant is located near New Eagle. The hotwater discharges located at this facility are particularly productive during the winter. **Pool 2 (from L&D 2 at Braddock upriver to L&D 3).** The Youghiogheny River enters the Mon within this pool, and the improvement in water quality is significant. Lorson's sampling in 1992 revealed 31 fish species within this river stretch.

Three species of black bass—smallmouth, largemouth and spotted—are present. So are catfish, both channel cats and flatheads. The dominant species are smallmouth bass, saugers and channel catfish. Some tiger muskies and walleyes also show up. For the panfisherman, there are plenty of rock bass.

Pool 1 (from The Point in Pittsburgh upriver to L&D 2). Lorson found 25 fish species within this unique pool, which ties in with the lower Allegheny and upper Ohio rivers. He thinks saugers, smallmouth bass, white bass and channel catfish make up the majority of the gamefish here.

Fishing tactics

Bill Johnson, Charleroi, fishes the Mon River year-round. I asked Bill to share his thoughts on fishing patterns for the Mon's more common gamefish.

Smallmouth bass. "In the fall, I look to the tailrace areas and rocky points and banks for smallmouth bass," Johnson says. "The fish are still scattered at this time of year."

According to Johnson, Mon River smallies go on a feeding binge during the fall, and it's possible to catch them on minnow-shaped topwater lures into November.

When the bass won't come up for a topwater lure, Bill recommends going to an action-tail jig or a small spinnerbait. He prefers smoke, or black and silver, for jig colors.

Hybrid stripers. The winter of 1991 was a banner year for hybrids. Bill caught them up to 24 inches then, but the fish were practically nonexistent last season. Johnson hopes things return to their previous status this year.

According to Johnson, the key is to finding the faster moving water. This includes water outlets from factories and power plants. These hotwater discharges were the places to catch winter hybrids two years ago.

Bill recommends going with a fairly heavy jig—1/4-ounce to 3/8-ounce—to get the bait down quickly enough to catch the larger fish. He likes 4-inch tube jigs for this application.

"The bigger ones are usually closer to the bottom," says Johnson. "When you find an active school, the little ones hit your bait first if you give them that chance."

Live bait also works well. Take a big shiner and add enough splitshot to let the minnow drift on the bottom when cast next to the fast water.

Saugers and walleyes. During the fall and winter, Mon River walleyes and saugers behave predictably. They congregate in

areas of slack water, particularly when the water is slightly high.

"I like it when the water is up a little bit," says Bill. "It makes it easier to find the fish. When the water is low, there are no particular holding areas."

Johnson looks for saugers and walleyes behind any obstructions that break the current. These could be points, walls, bridge abutments and other structure.

During most years, saugers in the 17-inch to 18-inch range are caught. The average fish is 15 inches or less. Walleyes in the 16-inch to 17-inch range are considered good fish, though occa-

sionally anglers dupe larger ones.

A jig tipped with a minnow is perhaps the best presentation for Mon River saugers and walleyes during the cold months.

White bass. Spring spawning runs are the better times to cash in on white bass because the fish ascend feeder streams. Ten Mile Creek is known for having good runs of white bass.

In the river itself, white bass congregate around pilings and the deep edges of

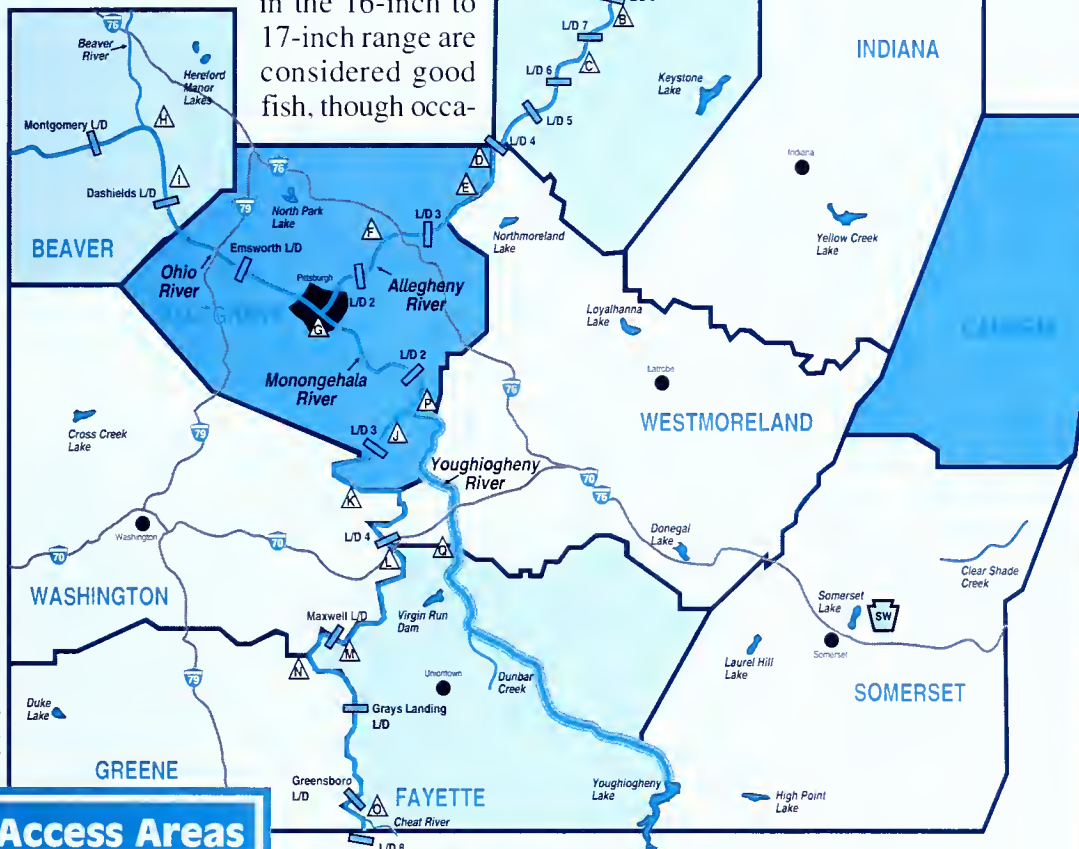
points and rock bars. The fish aren't particular, and small jigs work quite nicely, as do bait rigs dressed with small minnows.

Largemouth bass. "With the abundance of weeds in the Mon, the largemouth seem to be thriving," says Johnson. "If we could get a steady diet of baitfish for them to eat, I think we could have a tremendous largemouth bass fishery."

Johnson has taken largemouths in the 2 1/2- to 3-pound range from the Mon. He targets the areas with weeds and boat docks. When he finds the two in combination, so much the better.

The last 20 years have been a rebirth of a near-dead fishery. It's a good situation that promises to get even better as the Monongahela River's water quality continues to improve.

ANGLER



Access Areas

- A** = Brady's Bend
- B** = Cowanshanhock
- C** = Rosston
- D** = Tarentum
- E** = Springdale
- F** = Deer Creek
- G** = Southside
- H** = Rochester
- I** = Leetsdale
- J** = Elizabeth
- K** = Monongahela
- L** = Speers
- M** = East Fredricktown
- N** = Rices Landing
- O** = Point Marion
- P** = McKeesport
- Q** = Boston

Fish and Boat Commission Access Areas

- 1. East Fredrickstown Access (Fayette County).** East Millsboro, adjacent to the county ferry. Two miles south of Maxwell; seven miles upriver of Brownsville.
- 2. Point Marion Access (Fayette County).** In Point Marion, off Route 88.
- 3. McKeesport Access (Allegheny County).** Off Route 148, foot of Atlantic Avenue, at the mouth of the Youghiogheny River.
- 4. Monongahela Access (Washington County).** Off Route 837 at the foot of Nelson Street.
- 5. Rice's Landing (Greene County).** One mile east of Dry Tavern, off Route 88.
- 6. Speers Access (Washington County).** One mile south of Charleroi at Speers, off Route 88. Located just upriver of the I-70 bridge.

For a more complete list of public and private Monongahela River accesses, request the 98-page book *Guide to Public Fishing Waters and Boating Access*, published by the Fish & Boat Commission. This book is available for \$2 postpaid. Payment must accompany orders. Contact: Publications Section, Dept. P, PA Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.—JK.

Supplemental Stocking Program

According to AFM Rick Lorson, the Fish & Boat Commission stocks the section of the Monongahela River from L&D 7, near Greensboro, to Pittsburgh. Nothing is stocked upriver of that point because of the negative effect of the Cheat River.

On the remainder of the Mon, wall-eye fry and walleye fingerlings are stocked biennially in alternate years. Tiger muskies and muskies are also stocked the same way.

Striped bass hybrids are stocked every year, when they are available. They are stocked at a rate of 8 per acre in Pool 1 and 4 per acre in the rest of the river. Lorson plans to increase the stocking rate of hybrids in Pool 3 because of the presence of power plants there.

"I want to gather more information on whether it's worthwhile for us to be stocking walleyes in the Mon," says Lorson. "We know saugers prefer more turbid water. We just may not be getting the bang for our buck. But if we can provide some walleyes, it may be worth it."

Lorson said more extensive study work is planned on the Monongahela River for the section between Charleroi and the state line.—JK.

Cast and Caught



George Patterson, of Upland, caught and released this largemouth bass while fishing on Promised Land Lake last June. The fish was 21 inches long and weighed 6 pounds.



Brett Dunn, of Elizabethtown, caught and released this huge mirror carp while fishing in a Lancaster County pond last May. The fish was 36 inches long and had a 37-inch girth. Great job, Brett!



Throop resident George Belans hooked this brook trout while fishing on Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake in Lackawanna County. The fish was 21 1/4 inches long.



Daniel Mazns, of Hawley, was fishing on Lake Wallenpaupack last June when this brown trout attacked his lure. The fish weighed 9 pounds, 12 ounces and was 27 inches long.

Alex Grote, of Uniontown, earned a Junior Angler's Award for this nice yellow perch.

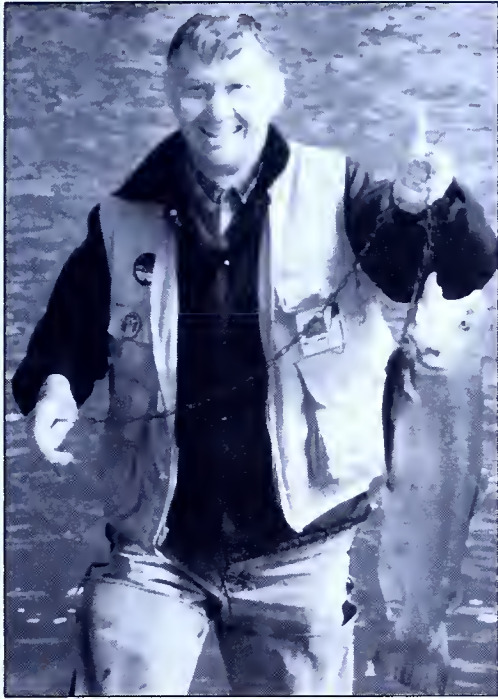
He used a redworm to entice the 1.37-pound, 14-inch fish to strike. Great job, Alex!



Wallingford resident James Gilliam, Sr., used a minnow to convince this crappie to strike. The fish, caught out of Springton Lake, Delaware County, weighed 1 pound, 5 ounces and was 13 inches long.



Cast and Caught



Oscar Ramer, of Allentown, used a shiner to catch this rainbow trout. The fish, caught out of Upper Jordan Creek, Lehigh County, was 6 pounds, 4 ounces and stretched the tape to 23 3/4 inches.



Downingtown resident Tenley Adams earned a Senior Angler Award for this rainbow trout. The fish, caught out of the Little Lehigh Creek, measured 25 1/2 inches in length and was 6 pounds, 6 ounces.



James Psimer holds up the muskellunge his fishing partner, Cheryl Hopkins, of Atlantic, caught while fishing on Tamarack Lake. The 31-pound, 50 1/2-inch fish was released unharmed back to the lake.



Luzerne resident Robert Kerdesky hooked this largemouth bass while fishing on Stevens Lake, Wyoming County. The fish measured 24 inches in length and weighed 9 pounds.

PG&W Allows Fishing on Certain Waters

Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company (PG&W) grants anglers who obtain permits permission to fish on these waterways:

- Carbondale No. 4 Reservoir, Canaan Township, Lackawanna County.
- Curtis Reservoir, Madison Township, Lackawanna County.
- Dunmore No. 1 Reservoir, Dunmore, Lackawanna County.
- Dunns Pond, Ararat Township, Susquehanna County.
- Elmhurst Reservoir, Elmhurst Township, Lackawanna County.
- Laurel Run No. 2 Reservoir, Plains Township, Luzerne County.
- Maple Lake, Springbrook Township, Lackawanna County.
- Springbrook Reservoir, Springbrook Township, Lackawanna County.
- Summit Lake, South Abington Township, Lackawanna County.
- Roaring Brook, from Dunmore No. 7 Reservoir to Elmhurst Reservoir and from Elmhurst Reservoir to Hollister Reservoir (catch-and-release area only), Lackawanna County.

Free permits may be obtained Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the following PG&W offices: 135 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton; Scranton Water Treatment Plant, Lake Scranton, Scranton; and 41 N. Main Street, Wilkes-Barre.

Applications are accepted by mail. Contact PG&W, Wilkes-Barre Center, 39 Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711.

Maps and regulations governing where fishing is permitted are provided with permits. All reservoir angling is restricted to shoreline fishing only.

BACKTALK

Would you like a photograph of you and your catch to appear in *Pennsylvania Angler*? Send a photograph of you and your catch to the *Angler* for publication consideration in the "Currents" section. Please send only snapshots and prints, either color or black-and-white. Please—no slides and no pictures larger than 8x10. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your picture returned.

Address correspondence to: Art Michaels, Editor, *Pennsylvania Angler*, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

Angler Contributors Win Writing Awards

Pennsylvania Angler articles won all three 1992 Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association (POWA) magazine awards. Freelance writer/photographer Linda Steiner won "Best Magazine Feature" for "It's Not the Trout, It's the Stream," which appeared in the April 1992 *Angler*.

Dave Wolf, former Commission media relations chief, won "Best Magazine Column," for his "On the Water" installments. He also won the "Trout and Coldwater Resource Award" for the column "Half Full or Half Empty?" which appeared in the September 1992 *Angler*. Steiner and Wolf received their awards last May at POWA's annual conference.

POWA's "Best Magazine Feature" award is sponsored by DuPont Fishing Lines. The "Trout and Coldwater Resource Award" is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited. The "Best Magazine Column" award is sponsored by the Coleman Company.

POWA's purpose is to improve knowledge and skill among its members in the art of communication. The group strives to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of our outdoor heritage in the use and enjoyment of natural resources.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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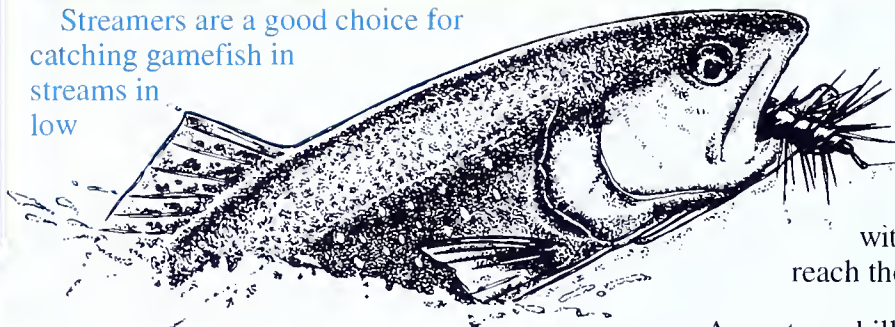
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Angler's Notebook

by Sam Everett

Streamers are a good choice for catching gamefish in streams in low



water. Try a size 10 olive Wooly Bugger or a black-nose dace.



When largemouth bass are reluctant to grab a topwater lure in weeds, offer them a lure that drops through the weeds, like a worm or a jig. Work the offering on the outside of the weed edge.

Refrigerator storage bags and plastic containers are perfect for storing fly tying materials. Be sure to use moth crystals with the feathers and fur. Aromatic cedar chips also discourage moths.

Large outboards aren't the most efficient engines for trolling. The slow speeds that trolling requires foul the spark plugs of big engines, and make these motors sputter. The most efficient, trouble-free trolling motors are those in the 5hp to 10hp range.

A rocky point that extends into the water attracts gamefish. The slope of the structure

reaches down into the water, often quite deeply. These points attract minnows and crayfish, which lure gamefish. Be sure to work these kinds of points with a variety of offerings that reach the depths.

As waters chill in the fall, the best trout action occurs when the water temperature is at least 50 degrees. The best fishing with flies usually takes place from 11 a.m. to about 5 p.m.

Monofilament line has much resistance in the water. This means that if you want to fish your lures deeply, use the thinnest-diameter line possible. This is especially important when working deep-diving crankbaits—the smaller the diameter of the line, the deeper the lure will dive.

Cool water in the fall means that trout feed less on the surface. They intercept hatches at the nymph stage more often than during any other phase of an insect's life.

A boat cover is a worthwhile investment. Sunlight slowly fades a fiberglass boat's gel coat, and takes the life out of upholstery. Sunlight can also cause deck seams to deteriorate. Our Pennsylvania winter thaws melt snow, which seeps into small gaps and spaces. When this water refreezes overnight, it expands in cracks and can damage your boat.

How do you know the correct tippet size for trout fishing? One rule of thumb is to divide the hook size by 4. For instance, if you're fishing a size 16 fly, a 4X tippet would be a good starting point.

illustration—Ted Walke

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Authors and Flies

They may be a minority of anglers, but fly fishermen read and write about it more than trollers write about trolling or plug casters about plug casting. Fly fishing has produced some of the most beautiful prose and some of the wildest rhetoric—enough that after a few years a serious fly caster is likely to be surprised at his row of books on the subject, some of which should be treasured and some of which should be burned.

Some of the richest copy comes from the 19th century, when Robert Barnwell Roosevelt commented on trout fishing. Are you ready?

Having given away a lot of books on fly fishing, I find I still have a 9-foot shelf of them, some of which I never quite got through.

“How pleasant is the sport to deftly throw the long line and small fly, with the pliant single-handed rod, and with eye and nerve on the strain, to watch the loveliest darling of the wave, the spotted niad, dart from her mossy bed, leap high into the air, carrying the strange deception in her mouth, and turning in her flight, plunge back to her crystal home.”

Things like that.

Such remarks can make the current TV fishing shows sound pretty drab. Cornfielding a foot-long bass into a bass boat that can go 65 miles an hour is pretty dull stuff.

Fly fishermen have always been readers and writers, beginning with predecessors of Izaak Walton. But scientific fly fishing was really getting under way when Samuel Phillippe of Easton, PA, built a 6-strip split-bamboo rod about 1845 or 1846. That's believed to have been the first complete split-cane rod. Pennsylvania is a home for technical fly fishing and hence deserves credit and blame for some marvelous and terrible prose and poetry on the subject.

There's quite a bit to write about. For example, Keith Perrault made up a dictionary of fishing flies 10 years ago and quit with 16,000 or so fly names, saying at the time he had barely started on the subject. He wondered (with some apprehension) just how many local flies are known only to close-knit groups of fishermen, many of whom would just as soon the world never heard of them and don't write at all.

Having given away a lot of books on fly fishing, I find I still have a 9-foot shelf of them, some of which I never quite got through. I even wrote some myself, two of which disappeared with hardly a ripple. Tackle and technique have advanced to

impressive stature, but the most intimidating phase of the business is entomology, the volumes on insect life becoming thicker and more colorful as the years go by.

It was some time ago that with considerable anticipation I opened a book on stoneflies. I'd always wanted to know about all three kinds and here was my chance. When I learned in the early pages that I was dealing with a minimum of 1,500 different stoneflies, my ardor cooled. But then, much earlier, Ernest Schwiebert in *Matching the Hatch* and other works produced pages of mayflies in color and in many cases there are rows of them so similar that I can't be sure of the differences without careful inspection. Schwiebert really knows that business. After looking at all those illustrations and beginning to feel inadequate, it is a relief to see Schwiebert land a 6-pound brown trout while using a shapeless hairy nymph that appears to have been left out in the weather for some time. That doesn't detract from the value of Schwiebert's writing.

A fishing friend of mine stalks the “technical” streams with confidence and catches countless trout of all sizes on flies that appear as fuzzy blobs. There are endless stories of ragged flies that produced better than artistic reproductions. Just recently, the business of leaving a strip of unshed “nymphal husk” on a fly is explained by the theory that a trout, having little sporting instinct, would rather grab a crippled insect than chase one that might get away. I am now looking for a text to be named something like *Fishing the Mayfly Wrecks* or *The Trout as a Scavenger*. They'll eat deceased muskies.

When it comes to that coarser business, there is a thick, hardback text on how to use big sinkers with a fly rod, the method turning out very much like what we called “strip casting” when my fly fishing world was young and some thoughtless wretches used to throw minnows with split bamboo.

Fly fishing has produced some of the most beautiful prose and some of the wildest rhetoric—some of which should be treasured and some of which should be burned.

I suspect the kind of person who delves into fly fishing is the kind of person who is likely to write something. I hid my grin some years back when a lumberjack with a purple vocabulary said he was going to write a text on fly fishing. His book was wonderful.



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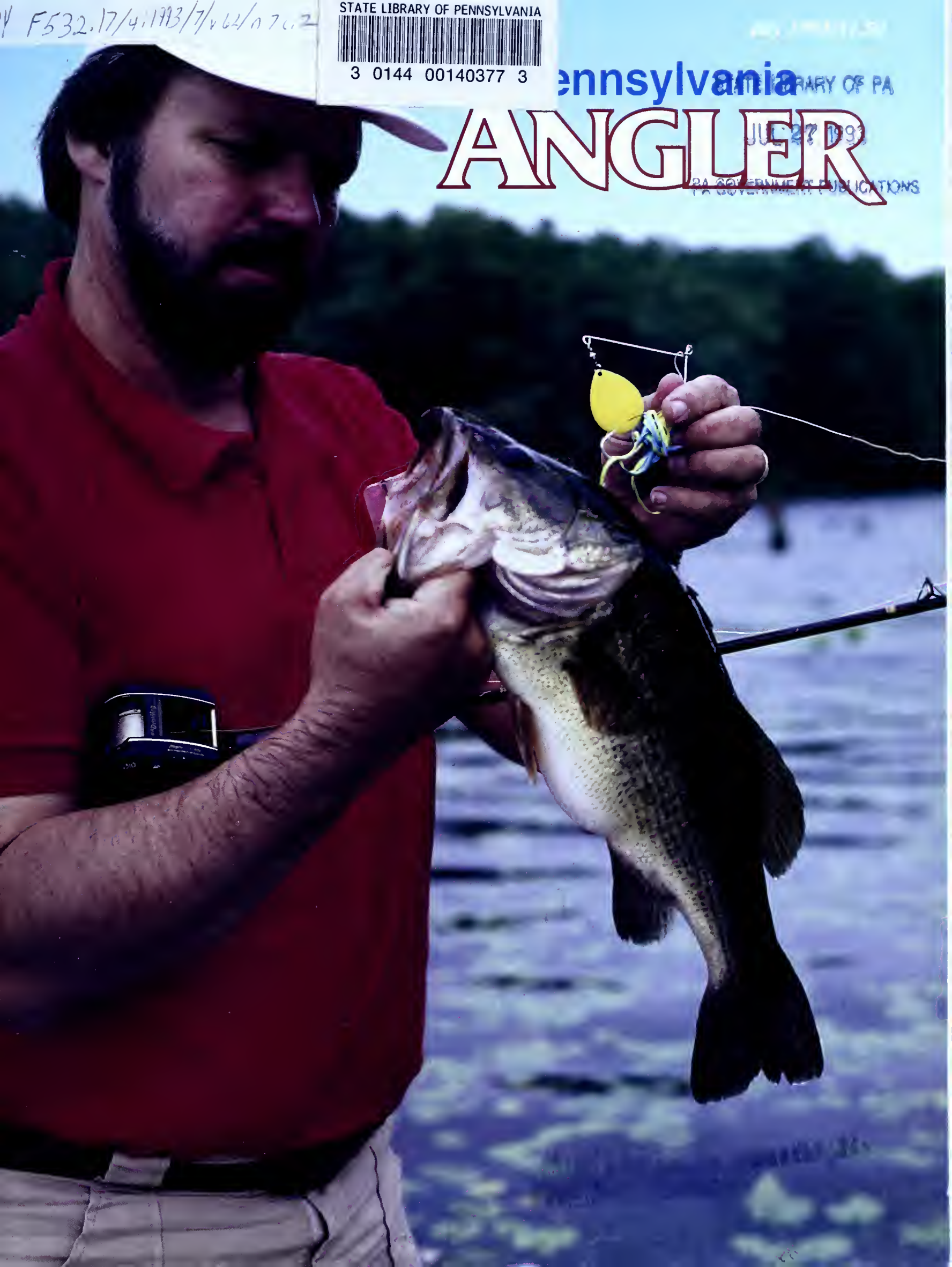
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Straight Talk

Historic Day for the Susquehanna

Before development of the Pennsylvania canal system in the 1830s, anadromous fishes like shad and herring migrated into the Susquehanna River as far as Binghamton, New York. Hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of shad were harvested each year by commercial netters in the upper Chesapeake Bay and lower Susquehanna River.

Dams built to sustain the canal system began to reduce the annual migrations, and on March 30, 1866, Governor Andrew Curtin signed Act 336, which established the post of Pennsylvania Fish Commissioner. The first Commissioner was charged with the responsibility for management of Pennsylvania's fishery resources, with the specific mandate of managing and protecting the migratory fishes in the Susquehanna River.

Although there was some redeveloped fish migration into central Pennsylvania when the canal dams were abandoned and destroyed in the late 1880s, construction of hydroelectric dams at York Haven and Holtwood during 1904 to 1910, and the Conowingo project in 1928, closed the Susquehanna River to runs of migratory fishes. The Fish Commission was unable to save the migrations because the Federal Power Commission and the U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries concluded that "it was very doubtful that shad would ascend a fishway of any description or any height."

In 1947, as the technology in fishway design improved, the Pennsylvania Fish Commission and the Joint State Government Commission requested the 1947 Session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly to ask the U. S. Congress to fund studies regarding the biological and engineering feasibility of constructing fish passage facilities at the Susquehanna River dam. Congress, in turn, asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to recommend to Pennsylvania and Maryland how to proceed, and the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Program began. Much water has gone over the dams and millions of shad have been handled since then, but the most significant event to date took place June 1, 1993, on City Island in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Representatives from governmental agencies and environmental groups joined with utility officials to sign an agreement to build fish lifts at three hydroelectric dams on the Susquehanna River in southeastern Pennsylvania.

The fish lifts allow American shad, river herring and other migratory fish species to traverse the dams on their annual upriver journey from the Atlantic Ocean via the Chesapeake Bay. Fish lifts at two dams—Holtwood and Safe Harbor—are planned to be completed in time for the spring 1997 shad run, and a ladder at the third dam, York Haven, would be completed by spring 2000. With the completion of the fish passage facilities, more than 200 miles of the Susquehanna River once again will be open to shad migration.

Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey said, "We look forward to the return of the native American shad to their migratory home in Pennsylvania waters of the Susquehanna River."

"This is a proud day for Maryland," said Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer. "This agreement shows how states and private industry can work together to create a better environment by working to restore the shad population to the Chesapeake Bay and the Susquehanna River."

Among those represented at the signing ceremony were the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Upper Chesapeake Watershed Association, Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, and Metropolitan Edison and Baltimore Gas & Electric companies.

I commented that "Today's agreement allows completion of the major fish passage facilities required to open the Susquehanna River again to fish migrations. It is a fitting testimony to the years of effort by many concerned people who were committed to restoration of this valuable resource. As Pennsylvania's lead agency in this long-standing effort, the Fish & Boat Commission is particularly pleased that the fishery restoration program has reached this historic level."

It is indeed a historic day for the Susquehanna River and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



Edward R. Miller, P.E.
Executive Director
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Pennsylvania ANGLER

The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

Swatara Creek *by Dick Becker*

The "Swattie" flows 85 miles from Schuylkill County to the Susquehanna River at Middletown. It's a gem for those who know its good fishing.....4

Kyle and Kahle Largemouth Bass *by Jeff Knapp*

In these western Pennsylvania lakes, good bass fishing comes in small packages.....7

Pennsylvania's Parkland Lakes *by Tom Fegely*

Some 96 of the state's 114 parklands contain some of Pennsylvania's best fishing. Check out this border-to-border look at where to go.....10

Focus on Midsummer Hatches *by Charles R. Meck*

If you think the great fly hatches end in June, guess again. Right now there's productive fishing with trout rising to hatches. Here's what's hatching and where, and how to cash in on the action.....14

Fish Plastic Worms like an Expert *by Mike Bleech*

Plastic worm fishing in Pennsylvania takes special attention to detail. These specifics can help you raise your score.....18

Surefire White Bass Tactics *by Darl Black*

White bass are a willing quarry and great fun to catch. You can have the most fun when you know exactly how to fool them and where the best fishing is in Pennsylvania.....21

Bald Eagle Bonanza *by Ed Howey*

The Bald Eagle State Forest, in central Pennsylvania, boasts many different kinds of trout fishing to please everyone.....25

On the Water with Dave Wolf

Those that got away.....31

The covers

This issue's front cover shows *PA Angler* regular contributor Tom Fegely with a nice largemouth bass he fooled on Promised Land State Park's Upper Lake, Pike County. For a detailed look at the best fishing in Pennsylvania state parks, please see page 10. Want more hotspot details? Check out Dick Becker's article on Swatara Creek on page 4, Jeff Knapp's specifics on largemouth bass fishing at Kyle and Kahle lakes on page 7, and Ed Howey's article on the smorgasbord of trout fishing available in central Pennsylvania's Bald Eagle State Forest on page 25. If you'd like to tangle with a willing quarry that's fun to catch, please turn to Darl Black's detailed look at our state's white bass action beginning on page 21. Lastly, get in on the great matching-the-hatch fishing for July trout with Charlie Meck's article on page 14. Want to see your picture in *Pennsylvania Angler*? Send us a snapshot of your best catch this season for publication consideration in our "Cast & Caught" pages, starting on page 28. Now's a terrific time to start a subscription to the *Angler* or renew. Check out the special offer on this issue's back cover.

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SWATARA CREEK

by Dick Becker



Some 72 smaller creeks, streams and springs feed Swatara Creek. Locate these junctions during the heat of the summer and fishing can be far better than you expected.

"No matter where or how long you've fished it, this creek is always full of surprises."

That's how Dave Piergallini of Palmyra describes Swatara Creek, water he's been avidly fishing for the past 30 years. And "Pierre," as he's better known among the local fishing fraternity, isn't one to be taken lightly. His prowess with a fly rod along the "Swattie" is well-known and respected, and if catching and releasing up to 700 smallies a year during his repeated outings is any indication, we should all sit up and take notice.

But Piergallini isn't alone in his assessment of this often overlooked fishery. Many others find that the creek gives them all they need in the way of challenges, variety, a sense of solitude, and yes, plenty of surprises. They have no need to go elsewhere to hook into respectable catches of bass, muskellunge, panfish, pickerel and just about anything else that happens along.

What “happens along” could be schools of crappies, walleyes and white suckers when the water and seasons cooperate.

Swatara Creek, averaging 75 to 100 feet wide, begins in the ridges and valleys of Schuylkill County, knifes through Blue Mountain, and then begins its slow, shallow meandering through the farmlands and small communities of Lebanon and Dauphin counties. In its 85-mile run to the Susquehanna River at Middletown, it has run the gauntlet of time and development, but remains almost as unblemished and pristine as when the Indians and moose roamed its banks in the early 1700s. That’s at least one of the prime reasons anglers find the creek so inviting.

Neither the beauty nor the history of the creek has gone unnoticed. It’s on the list for consideration as a Scenic Waterway, with parts of it in Lebanon County already designated 1A, one step away from the top classification. Furthermore, Dauphin County is studying the possibility of a greenway belt along its banks between Hummelstown and Middletown, intended to keep the creek in its natural state and protect its historical significance.

In its upper reaches, the Swattie still suffers from acidic influence, the result of past mining practices there. This, along with other environmental considerations, is holding up construction of the Swatara State Park Dam, a proposed 775-acre impoundment intended for use as a recreation area and as a water supply for the city of Lebanon. The breast of that dam would be located just a few miles above Lickdale, close to where the Appalachian Trail crosses the creek on Waterville Bridge.

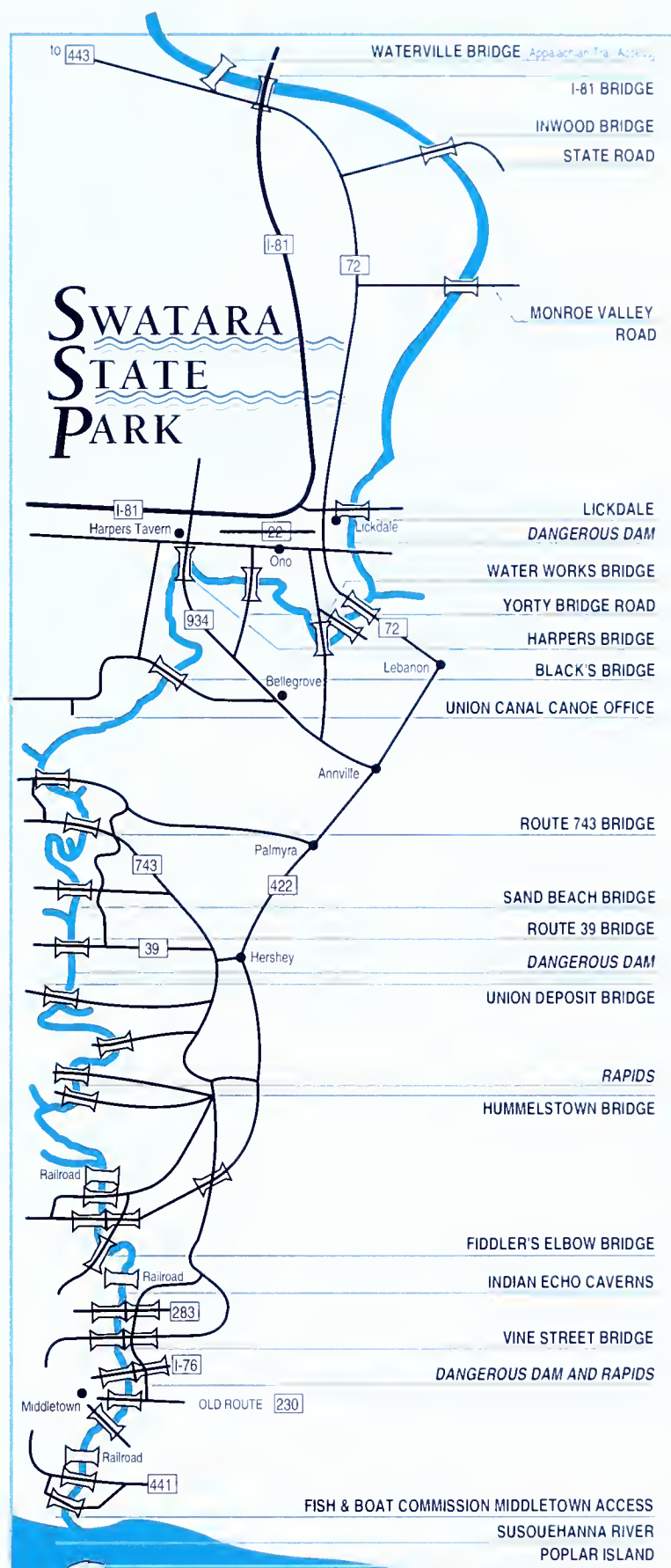
Bureau of State Parks officials say the dam’s filtering system would mean even better water quality downstream, and that neither the depth nor the flow would be altered because of the dam’s construction. These issues have long been a concern of anglers and residents below the dam site. Yet there are no guarantees that the dam will ever be completed. Available funds have also become a part of the problem.

The natural beauty of the creek, its flow through much private property, and the fortunate lack of development along its banks, do spell one problem for anglers—access. However, it’s basically a wading, canoeing and floating waterway anyway, running relatively shallow most of the time. It averages two to four feet in depth during the summer, with numerous holes and short stretches ranging from six to 10 feet deep.

Only two public access areas are along the two-county stretch. One is the Fish and Boat Commission’s Middletown Access, which basically serves Susquehanna River boaters, and the other is Derry Township’s Boathouse Road ramp near Hershey, used mainly for canoe and small-boat launching. Another small boat access is planned for the Commission’s newly acquired property at Waterworks, a 22-acre tract along the road between Annville and Ono. Its construction also hinges on environmental as well as archeological studies there.

Access and float-boat launching is easy at most bridges along the creek, or by walking short distances from roads that parallel it. Float trips are one way to get to know the Swattie intimately and to find ideal fishing holes. The Union Canal Canoe Rental outside Annville is the only boat rental on the entire creek. With over 30 canoes available there, anglers have access to 58 miles of water, with pick-up and drop-off service at many stations between Lickdale and Middletown.

Friendly as it may look, dangerous low-head dams can spell disaster for unwary drift-boaters. One such dam is at the pumping station in Jonestown. Others are below the Route 39 bridge



near Hershey and between the Turnpike and Route 230 bridges above Middletown. Portage is necessary around these dams and boaters should locate them before setting out on a trip.

Bass, panfish

The bed of the Swattie consists mainly of boulders, rocks and rocky ledges—ideal for smallmouth bass, rock bass and panfish. Its banks are often overhung with brush and trees that frequently protrude into the water, making perfect habitat for the territorial musky, occasional largemouth, and pickerel, but

Swatara Creek gives many anglers all they need in the way of challenges, variety, a sense of solitude, and yes, plenty of surprises.

old chainsides seems to prefer roaming the upper reaches of the creek from Harper Ferry into and above Swatara State Park.

Some 72 smaller creeks, streams and springs feed into the Swatara, including the popular Trout Run, Manada Creek, Spring Creek and Quittapahilla Creek. Locate these junctions during the heat of the summer and fishing can be far better than you expected.

Smallmouth bass are the major target of anglers along the entire Swatara, and according to Rick Valazak, Waterways Conservation Officer for the region, more and more anglers are taking to fly rods to catch them. "The water is clearer than ever, bass are plentiful, and our electrofishing shows that the number of bass over 10 inches caught in recent surveys improved from 10 percent of the total in 1990 to 17 percent of the total in 1992," he says. "We're cautiously optimistic, but the new bass regulations adopted over the last few years seem to be working. I also see a lot more anglers practicing catch and release."

Piergallini thinks he knows why more fly fishermen are heading to the Swatara. "Believe it or not, these bass act like trout. I use basically the same tactics and the same tackle, and vary both according to water levels and clarity, just like a trout angler would. The one big difference is that the bass don't hold in one place like trout. They're all over the place, even in the heat of summer."

Bill Horst of Hummelstown thinks much the same way. He's been fishing the Swattie almost exclusively for bass for about 60 years, and like Pierre, he ties most of his own flies, uses many of his own variations, and has his own preferences. "I think Swatara smallmouth move around a lot simply because the food source isn't as great as it is in the Susquehanna," he says. "My advice is to search out the shaded banks and pools first in summer, but don't neglect the shallow riffles and rock ledges in the sun. The bass go anywhere, anytime to get a meal."

Horst prefers to fish a dark, drizzly day, when the barometer is on the rise. "Time of day isn't all that important to me. With the white fly hatches beginning in late July and then the brown drakes in September, smallmouth bass really turn on to feeding."

Both Horst and Piergallini prefer lightweight rods in the 8-foot to 9-foot category. They go as light as possible on line and tippet, depending on the rods and flies. Like the trouters, they also try to match the hatches or the aquatic life available in the creek, such as crayfish, hellgrammites and minnows.

Wooly Worms and Wooly Buggers in black, yellow and brown, an Elk Hair Caddis, streamers such as Lefty's Deceiver and Clouser's Deep Minnow, and nymphs like Clouser's Swimming Nymph, Black Half-Back and the multi-purpose Clouser Crayfish lead the list of preferred flies, with all sorts of popping and hair bug varieties thrown in for good measure. "Just don't ever leave home without a Dahlberg Diver and a Chartreuse Sneaky Pete by Gaines," says Piergallini. "When nothing else works, they will."

Spinning enthusiasts prefer ultralight equipment for bass, though anglers using bigger plugs or topwater lures, such as the large Jitterbug, prefer lightweight rods that can handle 6-pound to 8-pound monofilament. The creek's shallow waters are ideal for floating/diver and topwater lures like the Jerkin-N-Sam, Cordell Big O, Rebel Crayfish, Heddon Tiny Torpedo and Phillips Crippled Killer. Spinners that score include Rooster Tails, size 2 or 3 Mepps, and a variety of dressed Blue Fox spinners.

High-yield spots for smallmouth are around Jonestown, where the Little Swatara joins its big sister, just below the Route 743 bridge, and the entire stretch from Hummelstown into Middletown, but no section should be overlooked.

Muskies

Those who fish strictly for muskellunge in the Swatara Creek, like Ed Ruch of Harrisburg, go prepared to catch the ugly duckface and nothing else. "I travel light, use heavy gear, and fish for them only during three periods of the day—daybreak until 9 a.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., or 6 to 9 p.m., no matter what the weather," Ruch says.

Ruch likes a lot of noisy action with his lures, the top four of which are the two-bladed Bucher Tail buzzer, Mepps Musky Killer, and two patterns of the 7-inch Bagley plugs. He prefers the shorter, wider lip of the Bagley because he thinks they work better in shallower water.

His equipment includes a 7-foot medium/heavy rod, and a Garcia 5500 baitcaster reel spooled with 14- to 20-pound-test line. "It sounds heavy, but you have to mean business with those big boys. I move around a lot and retrieve the lures as fast as possible, but muskies become conditioned by anglers, too, so sometimes I vary the retrieve just to fool them."

His tactics must work. His success rate is 33 percent on outings, and he's taken close to 100 legal-size fish, many over 40 inches. "Believe it or not, most of the ones I take are in water 2 to 4 feet deep next to deep holes. Other fish probably try to get into the holes and out of the heat, and the muskies are there waiting," he says.

WCO Valazak and his staff stock around 1,500 tiger musky fingerlings in the creek each year. "If anglers can find the springs and tributaries where the water's a bit cooler, there's plenty of muskies in the 30-inch and 40-inch range during the summer months," he says. "In the lower Swatara they also find pure-breds that often head up from the Susquehanna to spawn or feed, if conditions are right."

Ruch fishes the entire length of the Swatara, but finds the most productive area to be around Hummelstown where the creek flows past Kokomo Park. Other prime spots are the deep sections below the Turnpike bridge and above the Middletown Access. "Be on the water, watch for good cover—even tell-tale signs of movement—but go to catch muskies," is Ruch's best advice.

Pickerel are usually caught while fishing for other species, but those searching them out in particular find spinning gear with 6-pound monofilament and light wire leaders the ideal way to go. Live crayfish and minnows, yellow and white jigs, and flashing spinners appeal to pickerel, and they take them with a vengeance, so be prepared. A float trip through Swatara State Park puts you onto pickerel in a hurry, with good scenery to boot.

All in all, the Swatara Creek has a lot to offer. There's plenty of action, even with a can of worms at bankside.

Kyle *and* Kahle

LARGEMOUTH BASS

by Jeff Knapp

The long days of summer are well-suited for bass fishing—taking a few evening hours during the work week, when fishing pressure is low, for a crack at some fast-paced bass fishing. That's what Joe Renosky and I had in mind last summer when we made the one-hour run from Indiana to Kyle Lake, located near the town of Falls Creek.

Kyle Lake and similarly named Kahle Lake are proof that good bass fisheries can come in small packages. Kyle, at 165 acres, lies in Jefferson County, just west of DuBois. The Venango/Clarion County border bisects 251-acre Kahle Lake.

The resemblance of the two waters goes beyond the names. Both are "electrics only" waters, which keeps some boats away because the owners prefer not to fish where they can't use their large engines. Both waterways are under special bass fishing regulations. Kyle is a Conservation Lake and Kahle is in the Big Bass Program (see pages 28 to 31 of the *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws 1993*). Both waterways feature ample largemouth bass populations.

Consider the trip Renosky and I made to Kyle. In a mere three hours of fishing we caught 30 largemouth bass, most in the 10-inch to 14-inch range. I've spent plenty of time on Kyle during the past few seasons, and I have experienced good success on nearly every trip. My best outing was a stormy summer day in 1989, when my partner Dave Keith and I caught nearly 100 largemouths, many of which were near the lake's 15-inch minimum size.

Mike Fye, who operates the Sportsman's Cove Tackle Shop in Clarion, experiences similar bass fishing on Kahle Lake. The

potential for large bass, however, ones in the 4-pound to 5-pound range, is much better on Kahle than Kyle.

Fisheries background

Kyle Lake was "reclaimed" by the Fish and Boat Commission in 1985. The lake was drained, the sediment was dredged, and a fishing pier was built. After the lake was refilled, panfish, largemouth bass, channel cats and walleyes were restocked, as well as forage species like fathead minnows and white suckers.

One objective of the reclamation was to rid the lake of its abundant northern pike population, a species found to be unpopular with anglers, based on comments received at public Commission meetings. According to Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, pike reinvaded the lake in the spring of 1989 by swimming up the lake's spillways during a period of high water.

Following the 1985 clean-up, Kyle Lake was included among the state's conservation lakes, where there is a two-fish, 15-inch minimum size restriction on bass. Kyle remains a Conservation Lake, though Lee thinks there is a strong possibility the water might be placed in the Big Bass Program.

Commission surveys indicate Kyle's best years—in terms of both numbers and size of fish—occurred around 1989. During the spring of that year, electrofishing yielded an average of 61 bass per hour, 32 of which were over 12 inches, and 2.7 over 15 inches.

Since that time the density of fish has remained high—surveys have turned up fish at the rate of 51 to 56 per hour in the 1990s.

The numbers of fish over 12 and 15 inches dropped signifi-



cantly in 1990 and 1991, and began to pick up in 1992. Lee says Kyle Lake revealed good reproduction of largemouth bass in 1988 and 1991, and that good growth rates were experienced during 1991 (the drought year).

Panfish and white suckers are considered the most important food sources for Kyle's largemouth bass population.

In contrasting Kyle with Kahle, Lee thinks the higher alkalinity (which translates into fertility) of Kahle's water makes it a more productive bass lake. Surveys support this idea. The latest research, conducted under adverse "cold front" conditions during the fall of 1992, produced bass at the rate of 72.7 per hour, with 24.6 over 12 inches and 6.2 over 15 inches. An incredible rate of 179.3 bass per hour was turned up during a similar electrofishing study in October 1991.

Kahle's strong numbers of better-than-average-sized bass may well be traced to its special regulations. In the late 1970s, it was the first lake in the state where a 12-inch minimum size restriction was imposed. In January 1991, it was among the state's initial Big Bass Program lakes, which carry a four-fish, 15-inch minimum size limit.

White suckers, golden shiners and panfish make up the forage base for Kahle Lake's largemouth bass.

Fishing Kyle Lake

Kyle Lake has an interesting blend of physical characteristics, offering several niches the bass use in July. The water is relatively clear, and depths around 30 feet can be found near the dam. The main creek channel—inundated Kyle Run—stays closer to the north shore of the lake.

Mossy submergent vegetation is present out to a depth of about 5 to 6 feet. This weed growth becomes thicker as the summer progresses during a typical season. When the lake is full, there are many areas where a foot or two of water is present in the shoreline grass. Added bass cover is provided by the branches of trees that have fallen into the water. In certain areas, large rocks are located in the shallows, and these, too, hold bass.

Probably the most prominent bass attractors at Kyle are the numerous stumps. Scattered stumps pretty much rim the bottom of the lake's shallows. Many are large, with extensive root systems. They tend to top off 2 to 4 feet below the water's surface.

Not all of Kyle's largemouths can be caught in shallow water. Plenty of fish occupy the edges of points and turns that drop into the creek channel. During the summer months I catch largemouths as deep as 15 feet.

My usual strategy at Kyle is simply to launch my boat and take a "lap around the lake." I use the deep edge of the lake's weed growth as a pivot point for my movement around the lake. It's fairly easy to read this edge on a sonar unit.

As I slowly work around the perimeter of the lake, I zig-zag the boat from shallow to deeper water, and use a limited variety of presentations that have proven successful on Kyle. If one particular zone of the lake seems to be holding the bass, I concentrate on that area.

Here are the various presentations that score.

- **Plastic worms on the "edge."** If I were limited to one lure choice on Kyle, it would be a small plastic worm. I've had great success using the 4-inch version of the Razor Worm (Renosky Lures) in the shell and pumpkin/pepper patterns. Augertails (Mann's Bait Company) and Silkworms (Mr. Twister) have also been productive in pumpkinseed-like patterns.

I Texas-rig these soft-plastic offerings, using the lightest slip-sinker possible, 1/16-ounce or 1/32-ounce if I can get away with

it. Anything heavier sinks into the moss instead of lying on top of it.

Many fish congregate near the edge of the mossy cover, so make plenty of casts along this edge. Lots of fish are on the shallow flats, within the vegetation. I randomly cast the worm across this zone, using a jiggling/swimming retrieve to keep the worm from burying in the cover.

It also pays to make the occasional cast on the deep side of the boat, because some days the bass hold off the weeds in slightly deeper water.

- **Jumping the stumps with worms.** When conditions are just right—calm water, the right amount of sunlight, and clear water—it's possible visually to pick out the many stumps that litter the shallow-water zone. Naturally, you need polarized sunglasses.

The bass really hug Kyle's stumps, and I'm sure that when a person randomly fishes the flats, as previously described, many of the bass caught are from the stumps. So if you can pick out the stumps, it often pays to fish each one quickly and skip the rest of the water.

Using a Texas-rigged worm, I cast beyond the stump and quickly swim the worm close so that it falls along the object. A cast right at the stump may spook the fish. Cover all sides of the stump.

- **Soft-plastic stickbaits in the shallows.** Plastic worms are effective at Kyle, but by nature they require a slow presentation. Soft-plastic stickbaits cover water much quicker, including the flooded grass and wood common along the lake's shore.

The Scattering Shad (Renosky Lures), Slug-go (Lunker City) and the Power Slug (Berkley) are examples of these kinds of offerings. I've done best on Kyle with baits in the 4-inch to 6-inch range.

To fish the shallow zones of Kyle properly, use the stickbait unweighted. Casts should cover various types of water, with the retrieve slowed when the lure nears cover like a stump, branch or other object.

Fishing Kahle Lake

Physically, Kahle is quite similar to Kyle Lake, though it's about 100 acres larger. The deepest spot in the lake is just over 30 feet deep. Water clarity in the summer ranges from clear to slightly stained. Submergent vegetation—mostly coontail and pondweed—rims much of the lake out to depths of about 8 feet.

The majority of the wood cover is in the form of the 50 to 60 Christmas tree brushpiles placed in the lake by the Clarion County Bassmasters. These piles can be found in the 8-foot to 12-foot depths.

Mike Fye has fished Kahle Lake since it was first built in the mid-1970s. His biggest bass to date from the lake is 7 pounds. Fye's uncle and frequent fishing partner John Kerle once caught a 9-pound largemouth from Kahle's waters.

- **Plastic stickbaits.** Fye fishes soft-plastic stickbaits at Kahle in much the same manner as I fish worms on Kyle. He concentrates on the weed line itself, and also works the weed-covered flats, paying attention to maneuver the bait over holes and pockets in the weeds.

Fye uses an unweighted 5 1/2-inch or 7-inch Slug-go in either the shad or salt-and-pepper pattern. Most of the fish caught on topwater plastics this time of year are bass in the 12-inch to 15-inch range, though plenty of 3- to 4-pounders also show up.

- **Drift and flip.** Another of Fye's favorite tactics is to let the

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wind push his boat across the weedy shallows while he flips a jig-n-pig into pockets of open water. Water depths in this zone run from 2 to 5 feet.

For this tactic, Fye recommends a 5/16-ounce to 3/8-ounce skirted bass jig dressed with a pork chunk. Mike prefers a blue/black jig with a blue pork frog.

• **Spinnerbaiting the upper channel.** According to Fye, the creek channel is an important bass attractor in the upper portion of the lake. Mike likes to clean the 8-foot to 10-foot depths quickly with a spinnerbait. He also likes to work this lure along the weed edges.

Fye scores best with a 3/8-ounce white spinnerbait with a silver Colorado blade.

• **Swimming a worm over the weeds.** Mike borrowed this ploy from his uncle John Kerle. Kerle fishes a 6-inch plastic worm in much the same fashion as Fye works the stickbait. Kerle simply rigs the worm weedless on a 4/0 worm hook with no weight. He fishes it over the top of the weeds, and lets it flutter down in pockets of open water.

One final note concerning Kahle and Kyle lake largemouths: The fishing is good because there are lots of bass in a relatively small area. These entire lakes can be fished thoroughly during a good day on the water.

This relative small size makes them somewhat vulnerable. Good fishing will not continue if heavy harvests take place. The special regulations provide a level of protection. We as anglers can help further by releasing the majority of the legal-sized bass we catch.

Permitting
ANGLER

Getting There

Neither Kyle or Kahle lake is difficult to find. I-80 provides excellent east-west access to both waters. In fact, it runs right by Kyle's south shore.

To get to Kyle, take exit 16 off I-80. This puts you on Route 219. Follow Route 219 south toward DuBois a short distance. Turn right onto Route 830, which takes you through Falls Creek. Shortly after leaving Falls Creek, after crossing over I-80, make a left to get to the lake. A sign marks the way.

For Kahle Lake, take exit 6 off I-80. Travel north on routes 208 & 38. Stay on Route 38 when the two split, and continue approximately 1.5 miles. Turn right (there's a sign) onto the road to Kahle Lake. It's another 1.5 miles from this intersection to the lake.

Both lakes have paved ramps and parking lots.—JK.



Pennsylvania's Parkland Lakes

by Tom Fegely



photo-Tom Fegely

Some of the state's most popular fishing waters are set within the borders of 96 of the state's 114 parklands, owned and operated by the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) Bureau of State Parks. More than four dozen of those parks offer prime pond or lake fishing, many with boat access. Many parklands also offer stream fishing. The waters entertain a steady stream of campers and casters throughout the year, including diehard ice fishermen who may set up tents or RVs along the shoreline.

But from spring through fall, particularly during the "school's out" months, many parks fill to the brim. It's also when the lakes get their heaviest use.

Not all state parks are open to camping, but more than half offer family camping facilities for everything from tents to motorhomes. A few have sanitary dumping stations, showers and toilets, and Shawnee, Ole Bull and Pymatuning parks offer limited sites with electrical hook-ups. Most parklands without campground facilities are bordered by private concessions offering sites for hooking up RVs.

Some families head for state parks for their vacations or simply as enjoyable ways to spend long weekends outdoors.

Twenty-eight parks also provide rentals of more than 280 rustic or modern cabins, which can be rented by the week in summer and daily in the off-season.

Although DER owns and runs state parks, the Fish & Boat Commission manages the waters. That's why a wide variety of warmwater fish and a few coldwater lakes can withstand the often intense angling pressure placed on them. A few areas are managed as part of the Commission's Big Bass Program. Included on this list are Hopewell, Nockamixon, Marsh Creek, Yellow Creek, Memorial and Little Buffalo lakes along with Presque Isle Bay in Lake Erie.

Conservation Lakes regulations apply at Conewago Lake and Lake Arthur.

Underscoring their potential, many park lakes show up each year on the Angler Recognition Program list, which rewards citations and jacket patches for the state's heaviest catches. Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park is notable among them, typically leading the state in big bass catches and producing award winners for several other species. Over the past three years, Arthur accounted for anywhere from 25 to 39 of the state's biggest largemouth bass, according to Fish & Boat Commission records.

Add to that some notable award catches of largemouths in Pinchot, Wilhelm, Glendale, Marsh Creek Lake, Nockamixon, Shawnee, Marburg, Keystone, Opossum, Promised Land, Marburg, Memorial, Pymatuning, Redman, Bush (Dam) and Conewago lakes.

Muskellunge winners have been caught in lakes Glendale, Keystone and Arthur and northern pike have been caught in Yellow Creek, Black Moshannon, Laurel Hill, Arthur and Wilhelm lakes along with Lake Erie's Presque Isle Bay.

Glendale, Beltzville, Canoe Creek, Pymatuning, Arthur, Wilhelm

and Nockamixon are notable on the chart of lakes giving up award-size walleyes in recent seasons.

A few deep and/or cold parkland lakes have also yielded sizable trout. Notable are the brown trout hotspots of Pine Creek, Beltzville and Black Moshannon lakes and Stevenson Dam.

Pennsylvania's state park lakes are scattered across the Commonwealth, opening them to convenient day use by many anglers. Space doesn't permit a close focus of every lake (see chart), but here are thumbnail sketches for a half-dozen parkland "all stars," one from each region.

Northwest

Set on the Ohio-Pennsylvania border, Pymatuning (in the state park of the same name) Reservoir dwarfs most Pennsylvania lakes with its 13,500 acres. Species available in addition to panfish (particularly crappies) include both species of black basses, muskies, walleyes and channel catfish. Its most notable resident is the walleye with typical catches in the 15-inch to 18-inch range along with occasional 20-inch hook-ups.

More than a dozen access sites are scattered across the lake in both states. The northern sector is more shallow than the southern half with 20 feet the maximum depth but averaging only half that. You'll also find plenty of structure here with abundant acreage of stumps.

Anyone wishing to spend more than a day at Pymatuning has the choice of 657 campsites and 10 modern cabins.

Northcentral

Call it Blanchard Lake, Sayers Lake or Sayers Dam, it's known by all three. Camping anglers know it as a source of good large-mouth bass and smallmouth bass action along with muskellunge, pike, pickerel, channel cats and walleyes.

The lake's 23 shoreline miles offer plenty of structure for spring and fall crappie action. Some structure is naturally occurring; other structure has been provided by area angling clubs.

It's a toss-up whether the crappie or bluegill is the lake's more prolific panfish.

Its 1,730 acres are set within Bald Eagle State Park, northeast of State College, about midway between Milesburg and Lock Haven. No horsepower limits are imposed on the lake. Campsites number 60 and lake services include a full-service marina.

Northeast

As for camping and fishing, it's hard to beat Promised Land State Park in Pike County with its four lakes, 535 campsites and 12 rental cabins. Yellow perch, bluegills, chain pickerel and largemouth bass are the key attractions.

The park's Upper Lake is the most heavily used and the largest—422 acres. The Lower Lake with 173 acres is also popular, especially with panfisher-kids. The Upper Lake is the best bet for largemouths with many serious bass anglers top-plugging

Having overcome a severe pollution problem from failed wastewater systems in its main tributary about 10 years ago, Nockamixon Lake now offers walleyes, largemouth bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass.

or live-baiting them at night. Electric motors only are permitted.

If it's a touch of wilderness you want, a day spent at Egypt Meadows or Bruce Lake on the northern rim of the park near I-84 is the place. Access to Bruce's 51 acres requires a five-mile hike across a wide trail with camping allowed by special permit.

Egypt Meadows' 60 acres is best attacked by shore-casting or wading for the numerous pickerel in its weedy shallows.

Southwest

Arguably, Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park may be the champion DER water with not only big fish but a wide variety of other species. The waterway is best known for its largemouth bass, black crappies, northern pike, muskellunge, channel catfish and walleyes. Also in its 3,225 acres is the latest addition, pure-bred striped bass.

"Arthur has an excellent alewife base, and that seems to be the key to its good forage. The stripers should do well," says Rick Hoopes, former leader of the Commission's Warmwater Unit and now chief of the Division of Research.

In 1990 a 9-pound, 10-ounce lunker was taken from Arthur, attesting to the age and size the vast water is capable of producing. Set only 30 miles north of Pittsburgh, the location provides considerable day-use because camping is not permitted, although numerous private campgrounds are available nearby. The park does have several cabins for rent, and anglers can rent boats at the park. The lake permits outboards up to 10 horsepower.

Southcentral

Lake Marburg in Codorus State Park, York County, has largemouth and smallmouth bass, pike, muskies, walleyes, channel cats and plenty of panfish—notably yellow perch and bluegills—in its 1,275 acres.

The lake's depth reaches 50 feet or more. In-the-know anglers cast for largemouth bass and walleyes in or on the edges of the dropoffs.

The park is located just north of the Maryland border, east of Gettysburg and Hanover.

Outboards of 10 horsepower and under are permitted. The park's 198 campsites are frequented often in the summer months.

Southeast

Lake Nockamixon's nearness to the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia metropolitan areas makes it a popular summer playground for anglers and sailboaters. Having overcome a severe pollution problem from failed wastewater systems in its main tributary about 10 years ago, the Bucks County lake now offers walleyes, largemouth bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass, the latter first stocked as fingerlings in 1984 with catches now exceeding 15-pounders.

You won't find any campsites at this 1,450-acre lake, but 10 modern cabins are available. Motors up to 10 horsepower are permitted.

Planning a Parkland Visit

If you've not made a decision where to go, request a copy of the *Pennsylvania Recreation Guide*—a full-color map showing the locations of parks and routes leading to them. Included are campsite and cabin availability, lake sizes and launch sites, flowing waters and regulations.

Unless you've been there before, first call the park office to request a brochure detailing the lands, waters and activities, campsites and other features of the park (see chart on page 13). The helpful brochures are available for each park.

Reservations are available at some campgrounds and must be made in advance for all cabins. More than 280 cabins in 28 parks offer either rustic or modern accommodations. Weekly rental costs range from \$50 to \$200. Most cabins are booked by late winter.

For information, contact: Bureau of State parks, P.O. Box 8551, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8551. Or call toll-free 1-800-63-PARKS.



photo-Tom Fegely

Cabin reservations are available at some campgrounds and must be made in advance. More than 280 cabins in 28 parks offer either rustic or modern accommodations.



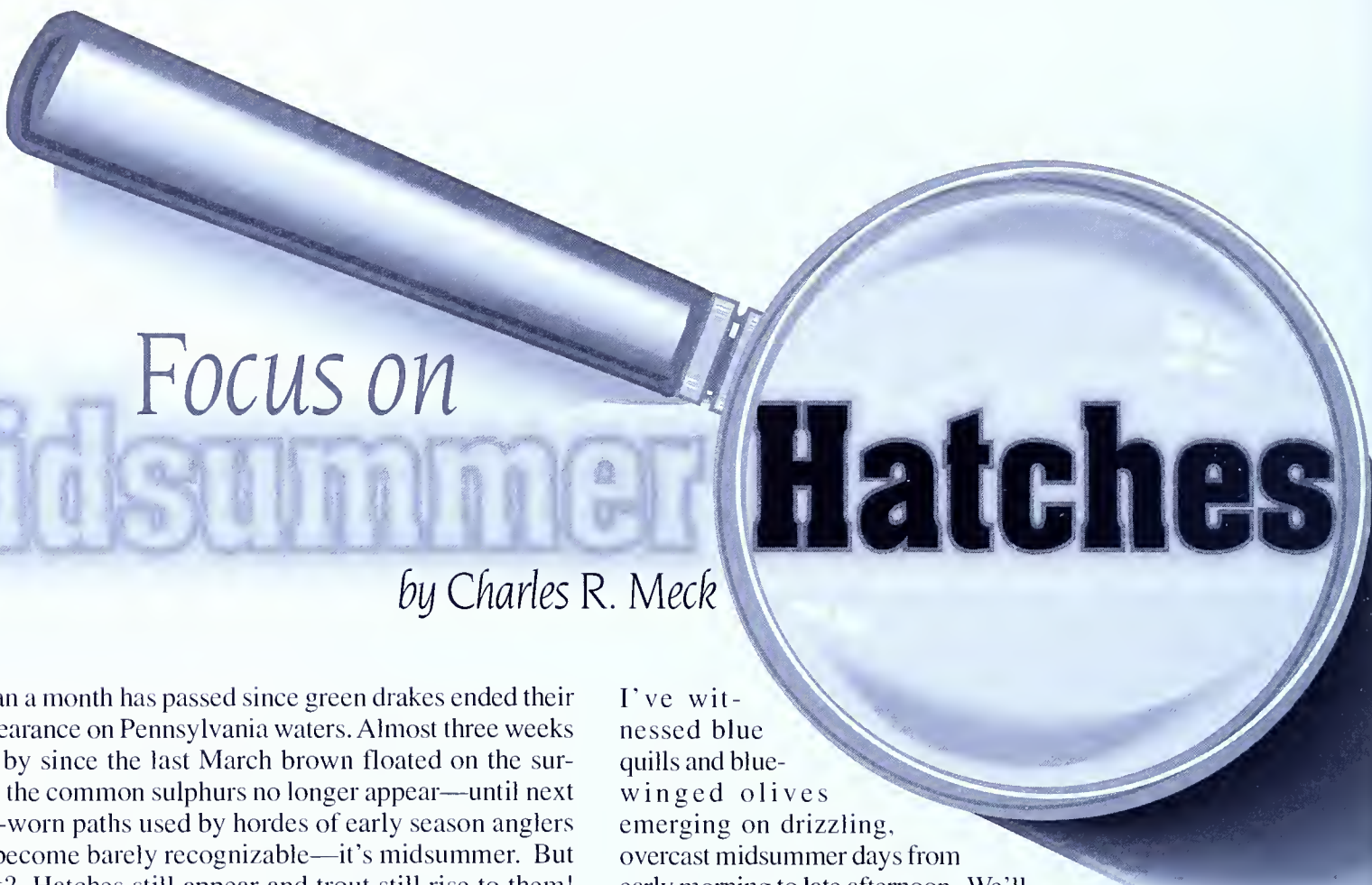
<i>State Park/County</i>	<i>Lake</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Campsites</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Northwest				
Maurice Goddard/Mercer	Lake Wilhelm	440	None	412-253-4833
Presque Isle/Erie	Presque Isle Bay	2500	None	814-871-4251
Pymatuning/Crawford	Pymatuning Res.	13,716	657	412-932-3141
Chapman/Warren	Chapman Lake	68	83	814-965-2646
Northcentral				
Bald Eagle/Centre	Sayers Lake	1730	70	814-625-2447
Hills Creek/Tioga	Hills Creek Lake	137	110	717-724-4246
Kettle Creek/Clinton	Bush Dam	167	72	717-923-0206
Little Pine/Lycoming	Little Pine Dam	94	105	717-753-8209
Sinnemahoning/Cameron	Stevenson Dam	142	35	814-647-8401
Elk/Elk	Clarion River Res.	1,160	75	814-929-5244
Lyman Run/Potter	Lyman Lake	40	50	814-435-6444
Parker Dam/Clearfield	Parker Dam	20	110	814-765-5082
Northeast				
Frances Slocum/Luzerne	Frances Slocum Lake	165	100	717-696-3525
Gouldsboro/Monroe	Gouldsboro Lake	250	None	717-894-8336
Lackawanna/Lackawanna	Lackawanna Lake	210	96	717-945-3239
Mt. Pisgah/Bradford	Stephen Foster Lake	75	None	717-297-2734
Promised Land/Pike	Promised Land L.(Upper)	422	535	717-676-3428
	Promised Land L.(Lower)	173		
	Bruce Lake	51		
	Egypt Meadow	60		
Ricketts Glen/Luzerne,				
Sullivan & Columbia	Lake Jean	245	120	717-477-5675
Tobyhanna/Monroe & Wayne	Tobyhanna Lake(s)	170	140	717-894-8336
Southwest				
Keystone/Westmoreland	Keystone Lake	78	100	412-668-2939
Laurel Hill/Somerset	Laurel Hill Lake	65	270	814-445-7725
Moraine/Butler	Lake Arthur	3,225	None	412-368-8811
Prince Gallitzin/Cambria	Lake Glendale	1,600	437	814-647-3691
Raccoon Creek/Beaver	Raccoon Lake	101	176	412-899-2200
Ryerson Station/Greene	Ryerson Lake	64	50	412-428-4254
Shawnee/Bedford	Shawnee Lake	451	300	814-733-4218
Yellow Creek/Indiana	Yellow Creek Lake	720	None	412-463-3850
Southcentral				
Black Moshannon/Centre	Black Moshannon Lake	250	80	814-342-1101
Canoe Creek/Blair	Canoe Creek Lake	155	None	814-695-6807
Codorus/York	Lake Marburg	1,275	198	717-637-2816
Cowans Gap/Fulton	Cowans Gap Lake	42	259	717-485-3948
Gifford Pinchot/York	Conewago Lake	340	340	717-432-5011
Little Buffalo/Perry	Little Buffalo Lake	88	None	717-567-9255
Poe Valley/Centre	Poe Valley Lake	25	79	814-349-8778
Greenwood Furnace/Huntingdon	Greenwood Furnace Lake	6	50	814-667-3808
Whipple Dam/Huntingdon	Whipple Dam	22	None	814-667-3808
Pine Grove Furnace/Cumberland	Laurel Lake	27	74	717-486-7174
Southeast				
Beltzville/Carbon	Beltzville Lake	947	None	215-377-0045
French Creek/Berks & Chester	Hopewell Lake	68	260	215-582-1514
	Scotts Run Lake	21		
Locust Lake/Schuylkill	Locust Lake	52	282	717-467-2772
Marsh Creek/Chester	Marsh Creek Lake	535	None	215-458-8515
Memorial Lake/Lebanon	Memorial Lake	85	None	717-865-6470
Nockamixon/Bucks	Lake Nockamixon	1,450	None	215-538-2151
Tuscarora/Schuylkill	Tuscarora Lake	96	None	717-467-2404



photos-Tom Fegely

Betty Lou Fegely prepares to release a largemouth bass (top photo) and a hefty yellow perch (lower photo). State Park lakes in the Commission's Big Bass Program include Canoe Creek Lake, Nockamixon Lake, Marsh Creek Lake, Memorial Lake and Little Buffalo Lake. State park lakes governed by the Commission's Conservation Lakes regulations are Lake Arthur and Conewago Lake (Pinchot State Park Lake).





Focus on

Midsummer

Hatches

by Charles R. Meck

More than a month has passed since green drakes ended their annual appearance on Pennsylvania waters. Almost three weeks have gone by since the last March brown floated on the surface. Even the common sulphurs no longer appear—until next year. Well-worn paths used by hordes of early season anglers have now become barely recognizable—it's midsummer. But guess what? Hatches still appear and trout still rise to them! Welcome to July fly fishing.

George Harvey, dean of fly fishermen, remembers well fly fishing back in the early 1950s in Pennsylvania. Then the trout season ended in July. Few fly fishers knew what great hatches they missed because of the short season. Little did they realize that still to come in midsummer were hatches like the blue quill (*Paraleptophlebia* species), yellow drake (*Ephemera varia*), more slate drakes (*Isonychia bicolor*), blue-winged olives (*Drumella cornuta* and *lata*), and yes, even tricos (*Tricorythodes* species). Little was known about these midsummer hatches because the trout season ended before many of these hatches began.

With the advent of more liberal fishing seasons, many Pennsylvania anglers now fly fish through the entire summer, confident that they'll encounter trout rising to midsummer hatches.

With a basic knowledge of the hatches, and which insects appear on local streams, you, too, can experience some of the most rewarding fly fishing of the year in midsummer. Add the bonus that you'll see few other anglers and a good number of trout, and you'll realize that fishing in July can have its rewards.

Most aquatic insects emerge at the most comfortable time of day. In July that means most of the hatches occur either in the morning or near dusk. You find some exceptions, but the rule to remember is to fish while hatches appear—daylight and sunset. We'll examine hatches that appear at both ends of the daylight spectrum. All predictions on hatch times are off, however, if you're lucky enough to hit one of those cool, overcast July days. Hatches often occur then throughout the daylight hours.

I've witnessed blue quills and blue-winged olives emerging on drizzling, overcast midsummer days from early morning to late afternoon. We'll look at one of these overcast mornings first.

The best day of fly fishing I've encountered in the past three decades occurred on a cold, overcast Fourth of July several years ago. That day a blue-winged olive dun hatch emerged on the middle section of the regulated water on Penns Creek. That dark-olive mayfly continued to appear on the surface for five hours.

Trout eagerly fed on these duns, which were too stunned from cool air temperatures to take flight. The air temperature that day never reached 60 degrees and a fine drizzle fell all morning. I quit after several hours of fantastic matching-the-hatch fishing with a size 16 blue-winged olive dun.

But there can be many more hatches that you can experience—even in midsummer. In addition to blue-winged olive duns, almost every July morning you'll see blue quill and trico hatches that produce rising trout.

Just this past year I fished the Little Juniata River during a cool early July morning and afternoon. I had arrived above Barree at 7 a.m. As I began to cast, I already saw several trout rising in the riffle above me. I leaned over to scan the surface for insects and found hundreds of blue quills in front of me. An occasional blue-winged olive dun also floated past. But most of the trout focused on a size 18 blue quill. Many fly fishers have hit the April blue quill hatch, but they have never witnessed this great a hatch of blue quills in July.

I tied on a parachute Blue Quill and cast to a riser just a few feet above me. On maybe the fifth drift over this riser, it took

On a number of Commonwealth waters you'll find tricos, blue quills and blue-winged olive duns emerging and trout rising almost every morning.

the pattern. Several more casts and another brown took the Blue Quill. The blue quill hatch on this cool, overcast, inclement early July day lasted for several hours before blue-winged olive duns replaced them as the heavier hatch.

But is this an isolated case of midsummer blue quills? Not really!

Several years ago, *Angler* contributor Dave Rothrock of Jersey Shore and I met at the lower end of Fishing Creek near Lock Haven around 6 a.m. Dave wanted to see some late July hatches on this fertile limestone stream. I told him that if we arrived early enough, we could see at least two mayflies appear.

By the time we arrived at the stream, a steady flow of blue quills already paraded past us from the riffle above and drifted



into a fairly deep, long, slow stretch in front of us. Even at this early time, several trout had already taken up feeding positions, taking every dun within reach. Dave tied on a size 18 Blue Quill imitation and it didn't take him long to feel a decent 12-inch brown on the end of the hook.

Within a half-hour, another smaller dun began to appear on the riffle above. Female trico duns drifted into the pool, took off for the far shore, and headed toward

a nearby bush or tree.

Why didn't we see male trico duns that morning? In a study of tricos in Minnesota, Robert Hall found that male duns emerge from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m. The air temperature had warmed considerably and the trico duns didn't dawdle as long as the





*You find some exceptions,
but the rule to remember is
to fish while hatches appear—
daylight and sunset.*

blue quills had done before. Few trout took these trico duns, but by the numbers emerging we knew we'd see a great spinner fall within an hour. Meanwhile, blue quills still emerged and trout still fed on this midsummer morning bonanza.

Trico spinners fell around 9 a.m. that late-July day. Dave and I successfully hooked several trout on imitations.

If you imitate the dark-grayish-black blue quill nymph, make sure you make the body slender. One look at the natural larva shows you just how sleek these common nymphs are.

The male spinner of the blue quill, called the "jenny spinner" by anglers, performs its mating flight every day throughout July, and you'll find them especially active in mid-afternoon. Many anglers confuse the jenny spinner with the trico. The latter is smaller and the end of its abdomen (nearer its tail) is cream. The rear end of the midsummer jenny spinner's abdomen ranges from brown to dark brown.

An excellent way to find out if any of your local trout streams holds July blue quill hatches is to travel along them in mid-afternoon. Look for mating swarms of jenny spinners. You'll see these size 18 spinners undulating (moving up and down) just about every afternoon.

Arrive early the next morning where you saw the spinners the day before and you'll find the dun of the mayfly, the blue quill, emerging. Carry copies of the female spinner (dark-brown body) and the jenny spinner (white body with the last three segments dark brown) with you. On occasion they can become important. Especially on windy midsummer days, many mating spinners find their way onto the surface.

These aren't isolated morning hatches. On a number of Commonwealth waters you find tricos, blue quills and blue-winged olive duns emerging and trout rising almost every morning.

July evenings produce even more hatches. On just about every

northcentral Pennsylvania stream, you find slate drakes emerging nightly and yesterday's dun, now called white-gloved howdy spinners, laying eggs. Streams like the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning, Loyalsock, Lycoming, Elk, Kettle, Larrys, and Little and Big Pine creeks, hold sparse to concentrated hatches of slate drakes. Many of these streams, however, warm by midsummer and relegate trout to tributaries and spring-fed areas. Many larger rivers in the state also hold a good supply of slate drakes.

The slate drakes represent one of the heaviest hatches on southwestern Pennsylvania's Youghiogheny River. Art Gusbar of Friedens and I have seen drakes on the water in good numbers in late June and early July.

Len Lichvar of Stoystown reports some slate drakes emerging this past year on Stonycreek River. Until a few years ago this southwestern Pennsylvania river had been ravaged by acid mine drainage. The Little Juniata River also boasts a good number of slate drakes. If you hit an evening when few other insect species emerge on the Little Juniata River, using a slate drake dry can produce some great fishing.

Anglers most often copy the summer hatch of slate drakes with a size 12 imitation. When the same slate drake species appears a second time, in September and October, anglers use a size 14 pattern because of its smaller size.

Look at exposed rocks and boulders in fast-water sections for slate drake nymphal shucks. If you see the fresh remains of these brownish-black shucks in numbers, you know the hatch has appeared recently and might appear again that evening. Slate drakes emerge around 7 p.m. in midsummer. When the same species appears again in the fall, it most often does so in mid-afternoon.

On some streams and rivers slate drake nymphs don't swim

to exposed rocks—they emerge right in the water. If you find one of these streams, you're in for some excellent fishing with an emergent pattern.

You can find other hatches prevalent during July evenings. Hatches like cream cahills and yellow drakes emerge on many area streams. Yellow drakes begin emerging about June 20 on most state streams and continue in more limited numbers throughout most of July. Fishing Bowman and Muncy creeks in the northeast hold ample numbers of yellow drakes, as do the Little Juniata River and both Bald Eagle creeks in central Pennsylvania.

The yellow drake appears just at dusk. It's a close relative of two earlier hatches, the green and brown drakes, and almost matches the size of the latter. Unlike the green and brown drakes, however, yellow drakes continue emerging for more than a month on our waters. The yellow drake never rivals the intensity of the other two, but because of its large size (copied with a size 10 or 12), and relatively late appearance in the season, it can be important. The yellow drake nymph prefers somewhat slower water than the other two drakes, so look for it especially in pooled water.

For years I fished the yellow drake hatch on dams and pools on Fishing Creek just upstream of Benton. Even in midsummer, Fishing Creek's water temperature rarely rises much above 60 degrees. While waiting for the hatch to appear at dusk, I often had to get out of the stream to warm my body, chilled by the cold water. Then at about 8:30 p.m., yellow drakes began appearing. Trout in these slow sections focused on these large mayflies and fed voraciously. Almost every evening I landed at least one trout in the 15-inch-plus category. This matching-the-hatch excitement occurred in early July, and seldom, if ever, did I see another angler fishing this hatch.

In addition to Fishing Creek, many small freestone streams hold respectable yellow drake hatches. Sixmile Run in northern Centre County holds a number in some of its slower stretches.

Don't overlook spinner falls in July. Many anglers fish trico spinner falls in the morning but overlook some important ones in the evening. Some of the best fishing I've experienced in the past decade occurred in midsummer during the dark-olive spinner fall. Blue-winged olive duns change into dark-olive spinners. Usually the blue-winged olive dun emerges in the morning or early afternoon and flies to a bush or nearby tree. There it sheds its outer skin and becomes a mating adult or spinner.

This change takes from a few minutes in some mayflies to several days in others, depending to a great extent on weather. A day or two after the dun has appeared, the female spinner returns to the water to lay its fertilized eggs. These dark-olive spinners fall onto the surface in numbers any time after 7 p.m.

Look for subtle, continuous rises to indicate that trout are feeding on spinners. When fishing spinner imitations, it's even more important to produce a drag-free float and to match the natural in color and size. Because the spent spinner can't escape as the dun can, trout examine it closely before taking it. I copy the body of these dark-olive spinners by mixing one part of dark-olive poly with 10 parts of black. The resultant body works exceptionally well during the spinner fall.

Where can you find good dark-olive spinner falls in early July? Try Penns Creek a few miles below Coburn or the Little Juniata River just above Barree. Both hold fishable spinner falls for several weeks.

What will you do in July? Will you call it a fishing season and hang up your fly fishing gear because you think that few hatches and spinner falls remain? Will you head out to your favorite stream in mid-afternoon?

Or will you limit your fishing to morning and evening when hatches and spinner falls most often occur? And finally, will you limit your fishing to the dozens of streams and rivers scattered throughout the Commonwealth that hold hatches and rising trout—even in July?

Pennsylvania
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Fish Plastic Worms *LIKE AN EXPERT*

by Mike Bleech

My friend Larry had asked me to show him how to fish for largemouth bass with plastic worms. I rigged my line first. While I helped Larry Texas rig his worm, unconsciously I let my worm dangle in the lake.

Fortunately, I had the spinning reel bail open while I rigged my worm and I hadn't yet closed it, because if the bail had been closed I would probably have lost an expensive rod and reel. While I helped Larry rig, a bass ate my worm and then swam away. The rod tip rattling against the side of my aluminum boat alerted me.

I grabbed the rod, closed the bail, and when the bass pulled the line tight I set the hook.

"Now, that isn't so difficult, is it?" I said to Larry as I gave him a last look at the 3 1/2-pound bass just before releasing it.

And it isn't. Larry was catching bass on plastic worms in short order. You can, too.

What you need

One of the nice things about plastic worming is that it is relatively inexpensive. All you really need in addition to your rod, reel and line are plastic worms, worm hooks and sinkers, which most bass anglers prefer to call worm weights.

Which worms? There is so much variety of opinion about this that the market is flooded with every kind of plastic worm imaginable. So realize that this is just my opinion, no more valid than anyone else's. Anglers catch plenty of bass using worms and tackle that are different from what I suggest. All I

am trying to do is give you a solid foundation on which you can build your own system.

Start with the feel of the worm. I like soft worms. They feel life-like, so bass hold on to them. The disadvantage of soft worms is that bass, or panfish, tear them apart quickly. They usually are destroyed by three or four hits, sometimes by just one hit.

Worms are inexpensive, so when some catch my fancy I buy them. I carry worms of several lengths from 4 inches to 9 inches, but just about all of the worming I do in Pennsylvania and other Northeast waters is with 6-inch to 7-inch worms.

Worm shape? Like a worm? Well, sort of, sometimes.

The first plastic worms that I used back in the early 1960s were shaped like real worms, or nightcrawlers. Some of the plastic worms I use now only vaguely resemble any worms that I have seen. Do we really need all those shapes?

Probably all those different shapes do not help much. Can't hurt, either. I do not pay a lot of attention to shape, though I do have a favorite. It is a basic worm shape with one small variation—a short screw tail. Many worm manufacturers make a model that fits this description.

I am more serious about colors. For the most part, I use black-grape worms—that's dark purple. Sometimes in clear water I use translucent blue or smoke, and I like a mix of red and blue with silver flake.

The major hook makers have their versions of plastic worm hooks. It would not surprise me

if they are all just fine. Use whichever hooks give you confidence. I rate the Mister Twister Keeper Hook as the easiest to rig, which makes it a good choice for beginners.



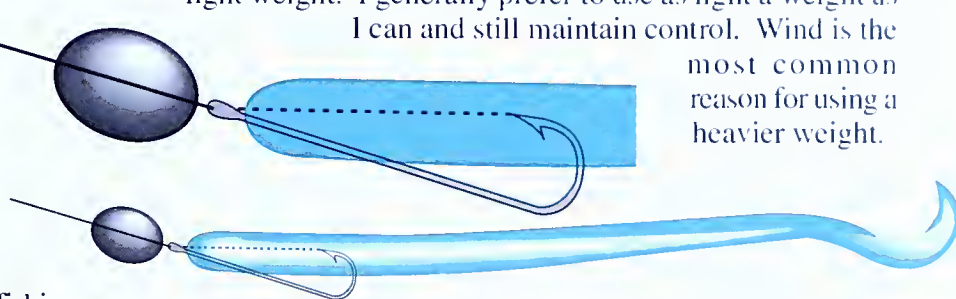
Whichever hooks you decide to use, carry an assortment of sizes from 1/0 to 5/0. Start with just a few of each, until you determine which size you use most often.

Bullet sinkers are the standard worm weights. They are shaped like bullets with holes through the centers. The reason for the shape is to slip easily through weeds and other cover. The hole also allows the sinker to slide on the line. You need bullet weights in sizes from 1/8-ounce to 1/2-ounce. I also suggest, for reasons we will cover later, that you also carry 3/4-ounce and one-ounce egg sinkers, and an assortment of splitshot. That is all you need to fish with plastic worms.

If you want a rod, reel, and line perfectly suited to worm fishing, I suggest you wait until you have had the opportunity to try several. My primary worming outfit consists of a 6 1/2-foot, extra-fast-action graphite rod, a spinning reel, and 10-pound-test line. A lot of good bass anglers tell you my line is too light, or that they prefer a level-wind casting outfit. Suit yourself.

Now look at three ways to rig plastic worms—the Texas rig, Carolina rig and Finger Lakes rig.

Bullet weights weighing from 1/8-ounce to 1/2-ounce should cover most situations you encounter in this state. The most important consideration when choosing weight is the drop rate of the worm. When you want the worm to drop slowly, use a light weight. I generally prefer to use as light a weight as I can and still maintain control. Wind is the most common reason for using a heavier weight.



Finger Lakes rig

The Finger Lakes rig is a modification of the Texas rig. The differences are that instead of a bullet weight it uses an egg sinker, and the hook is a Mister Twister Keeper Hook.

Slide a 3/4-ounce or one-ounce egg sinker onto the line, then tie on a Keeper Hook. Rig a bulky worm onto the hook. Finally, peg the sinker onto the line with a round toothpick so that it can't slide.

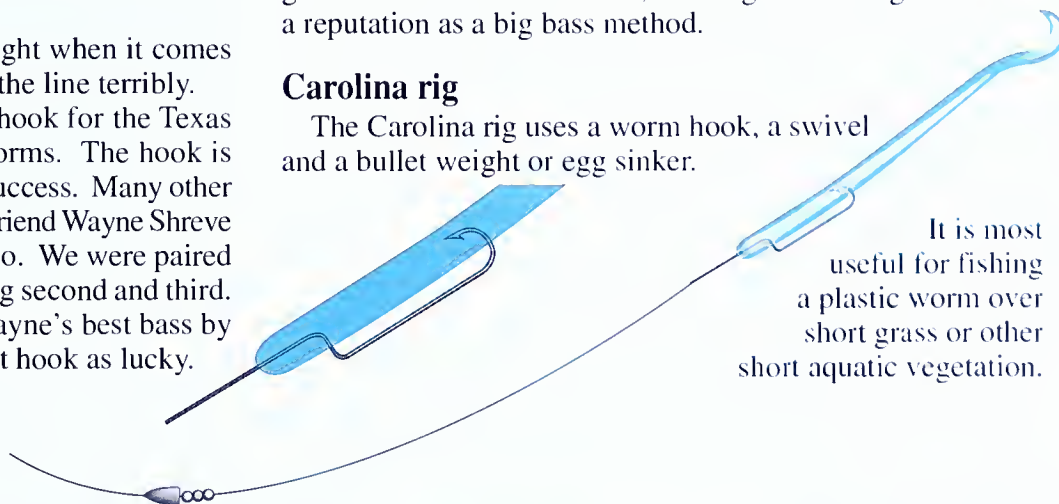
The Finger Lakes rig is a specialty rig for getting a plastic worm down through thick vegetation. It is fished vertically, or nearly so, with a flipping rod. The weight of the sinker pulls the worm through matted weeds. The shape of the sinker makes it drop quite straight, so it can be pulled straight back up without tangling in the weeds. The hook style keeps the worm straight even while you rip it through the weeds.

This rig, as far as I know, was developed by a few Kane anglers, Jack Bell and Fred Lorenzo, to cope with thick weeds they encountered during bass tournaments on the Finger Lakes of New York. Many other anglers have used egg sinkers with the Texas rig, but most would think that the bass would mind such a heavy sinker. They don't.

The beauty of this rig is that it reaches bass that other anglers can't reach. As a result, the Finger Lakes rig has earned a reputation as a big bass method.

Carolina rig

The Carolina rig uses a worm hook, a swivel and a bullet weight or egg sinker.



Texas rig

The Texas rig is probably the most used method for rigging plastic worms. It is simple and versatile, consisting of a worm hook, a bullet weight and a plastic worm.

First, insert the line through the pointed end of a bullet sinker. Next, tie on the hook. Begin rigging the worm by inserting the hook into the nose of the worm. Run the hook about a quarter-inch into the worm, then poke it out. This should be enough to bury the hook eye and part of the shank. Now you also want to cover the point of the hook back to the bend. Lay the worm alongside the hook to determine precisely where you should impale the worm, and then do it.

The worm should be rigged so it is straight when it comes through the water. Otherwise it will twist the line terribly.

I use the Eagle Claw No. 95JBL worm hook for the Texas rig, size 2/0 or 3/0 for 6-inch to 7-inch worms. The hook is colored blue, and I believe this adds to my success. Many other worm hooks probably work just as well. My friend Wayne Shreve got me started with this hook some time ago. We were paired together in a club bass tournament, finishing second and third. I caught the tournament lunker, beating Wayne's best bass by one ounce. Since then I have regarded that hook as lucky.

One of the nice things about plastic worming is that it is relatively inexpensive. All you really need in addition to your rod, reel and line are plastic worms, worm hooks and sinkers.



I carry worms of several lengths from 4 inches to 9 inches, but just about all the worming I do in Pennsylvania is with 6-inch to 7-inch worms.

Begin your Carolina rig by tying a barrel swivel onto the line. Then cut the line above the swivel at whatever length you want the worm and weight separated. Next, slide the sinker onto the main line, and then tie the main line to the swivel. Finally, tie a worm hook to the end of the leader and rig it with a plastic worm.

An optional way to produce similar results is to eliminate the swivel and bullet weight and substitute a splitshot.

The object of this rig is for the worm to float above the weight where bass can see it. Therefore, make sure the hook is not so heavy that it sinks the worm.

Fishing worms

How can't a worm be fished? I would be hard pressed to answer that question. You can use a plastic worm just about any way imaginable and still catch bass. In fact, I have hooked bass, both largemouths and smallmouths, with plastic worms that were not even in the water!

The first time was many years ago. It was the incident that convinced me plastic worms belong in my tackle box. I was working the worm through some large boulders. One boulder was in the path of my retrieve, so I dragged the worm over it. As the worm "crawled" over the boulder, a big smallmouth exploded out of the water, jumping onto the boulder to eat the worm.

If you accidentally hang a worm on an overhanging limb while casting to shoreline cover, don't be too quick to yank the worm out of the tree. Instead, give it some slack line, enough to lower it so the tail dimples the surface. It might not happen often, but when it does the strike is thrilling.

Plastic worms can be crawled, swam, hopped, twitched, jerked or still-fished. The way you fish, or present, a plastic worm should depend on the situation. Divide the situations into two categories: cast and retrieve, and drop methods.

The drop methods are flipping and pitching. These methods are intended mostly for fishing a lure close to cover, such as a weed line, a log or a brush pile. These methods are complete subjects in themselves. Nonetheless, if you simply try to cast a worm close to cover so that it sinks alongside the cover, you are likely either flipping or pitching.

Most hits occur while the worm is dropping. But especially when fishing is slow, you should let the worm rest on the bottom for several seconds, and maybe even wiggle it a bit after waiting those several seconds. Even when you do not wiggle the worm, it typically does a lifelike dance because of its buoyancy. Watch this closely in shallow water so you know what is going on. This gives you confidence, which makes you a better worm angler.

Casting and retrieving gives you the most options in presentation, because you are covering the water both vertically and horizontally. You can vary the cadence, speed or direction.

Generally, worms are best as a slower-retrieve lure. My favorite presentation is a slow lift and drop. In my experience, the vast majority of hits occur while the worm is dropping or rising—in other words, while the worm is moving vertically. My primary purpose for horizontal movement is to move the worm to try another vertical presentation.

You can complicate this subject as much as you want, but this much can make you a more successful worm angler.

ANGLER

SUREFIRE

White Bass Tactics

by Darl Black



photo-Darl Black

The only thing better than battling a white bass is introducing someone else to the sport. The voracious appetite of white bass makes these fish willing to attack lures enthusiastically.

Like fingers reaching out to touch the boat, shadows extended farther and farther across the water as the sun slipped lower in the horizon.

Our search for largemouth bass continued down the edge of the weedline. On hearing the *kersplash* of a surface-feeding fish behind us, Marilyn cast her Tiny Torpedo toward the open water. It was immediately met with a rod-wrenching strike.

"Whooooah," was all I heard above the squeal of a slipping drag. I reeled in my line and offered words of encouragement.

She gained line only to have the fish take off again. I doubted it was a largemouth from the outset. Finally getting a glimpse of silver, I knew it was a white bass.

The first attempt with the landing net missed, but on the rebound I slid the chunky fish into the mesh. It was a very nice specimen, going about 2 pounds.

"That white put on a better fight than any largemouth I caught today," Marilyn said, as I snapped a quick photo before releasing the fish. "I want to catch more!"

I knew the evening's largemouth fishing was over. Marilyn was on a white bass kick. Not that I objected. White bass are an explosive package worthy of attention.

Get to know them

White bass are a smaller cousin of the striped bass. That explains the power of the white bass. White bass are only one of two species of true bass found exclusively in freshwater. The white bass' closest kin, the yellow bass, is not native to Pennsylvania waters. Largemouth and smallmouth bass are actually overgrown sunfish, not true bass.

The original distribution of white bass in Pennsylvania was limited to Lake Erie and the Allegheny River. Today they can be found in additional lakes and rivers throughout the western part of the state.

A schooling fish, the white bass is neither object-dependent nor bottom-oriented. It is at home roaming open water in search of baitfish forage, especially gizzard shad.

Since I was a kid, I have enjoyed fishing for white bass. The only thing better than battling a quality white bass is introducing someone else to the sport. The voracious appetite of white bass makes these fish willing to attack lures with gusto.

Even though adult white bass feed mainly on minnows, an artificial lure presentation beats live minnows as bait, hands down. Feeding whites are very aggressive. Lures are more efficient because a live minnow may be knocked off during a

cast or during the initial attack by a white bass. Also, lures can be retrieved in an injured minnow fashion easier than live bait.

You have the most fun white bass fishing when you match the tackle to the fish. Never go armed for bear. Light is better.

Often the recommendation is to use ultralight equipment. This may be fine for small whites on tiny jigs. However, ultralight rods typically used for panfish and trout are too soft to fling many lures used for white bass. In addition, long casts are often needed, and a short 5 1/2-foot ultralight rod is not the best tool.

I prefer a 6-foot to 7-foot light-power rod with a fast tip action capable of casting 1/8-ounce to 3/8-ounce lures. For jigs I go with a 6-foot to 7-foot beefy ultralight—not too soft.

These rods are matched to open-face spinning reels with 6-pound test for plugs and 4-pound test for jigs. Generally, white bass fishing takes place in open water, so light line is fine. However, when schools work weedy areas or brushy cover, or when you find giant white bass, I usually jump to 8-pound test for lures and 6-pound for jigs to prevent breakoffs.

Spring

The majority of my white bass experience is on lakes and reservoirs. The first encounter with white bass each season occurs when the fish move shallow as water temperature climbs into the mid-50s.

In a river system or a reservoir with an inflowing river, white bass migrate upstream to spawn over rocky shoals. Lacking a river current, whites in impounded water spawn over shallow, windswept rock-rubble bars or pea-gravel beaches. They build no nests. Eggs are broadcast over the bottom and fertilized, in the same fashion as walleyes.

From early May to mid-June, groups of white bass may be observed in the shallows engaged in spawning rituals. Small 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce jig-spinner combinations are one of the best springtime lures for white bass. This may be either an overhead-spinner like a Beetle Spin or a body-spinner like the Blakemore Road Runner. Running a close second is an ordinary action-tail jig. Whites strike lures of any color, but smoke, white or silver are usually most productive.

When whites are observed in shallow water near shore, cast beyond the fish and retrieve the jig-spinner very close to the group of fish. One or more inevitably move away from the group to strike the lure. Casting directly into the group or dragging the bait through the fish may spook them.

If fish are not visible in the shallows, focus your efforts on tapering points and shallow flats.

The jig-spinner remains a good choice. Cast, count it down to the bottom, and retrieve quickly for 10 feet. Stop, let it drop several feet, and begin a steady retrieve for another 10 feet. On the next cast, count down only half the distance to the bottom and begin a stop-and-go retrieve. On the third cast, work the lure just under the surface.

Keep moving until a school is located. Although white bass are not cover-oriented, it is possible to find them around emerging weedbeds or brush in the spring simply because that is where forage can be found. However, points are the primary areas to search. A classic spot is a gravel bar formed at the mouth of an inflowing stream located very close to a main lake point.

Summer

White bass gradually filter out of the shallows after the spawn. By late June the shallow-water action is usually over. The fish are nomadic in the early summer. They spend most of their

time suspended over deep water tracking schools of baitfish. At times they may push bait to the surface in a feeding frenzy. Often they move shallow in the evening or early morning.

Once the lake's water temperature rises into the mid-70s, white bass schools establish a routine that carries them until fall. The exact routine is different on each body of water, but it is tied closely to the patterns of baitfish.

A traditional approach to summer white bass is night fishing with lanterns hanging over the side of the boat. Bugs are attracted to the light, and eventually end up in the water.

Minnows are attracted by a supply of bugs on the surface, and white bass follow the minnows. Causeways, riprap dam breasts, and dam outflow areas are key sites for this approach.

Anglers who search specifically for white bass during the day are most successful trolling small crankbaits. Slender minnow baits, such as an Original Rapala #7 or #9, can be very productive. Often a noisemaker seems to be preferred by the fish, so experiment with small rattle baits like the #5 Rattlin' Rapala or 1/4-ounce Rattle Trap.

Those plugs are not deep divers, yet different water depths must be strained while trolling. Run the rattle bait on a flat line with a few splitshot to keep it 3 to 4 feet deep. Run a minnow bait on a Gape Bait Walker or similar trolling sinker. Use a half-ounce to one-ounce model to take the lure down 12 to 22 feet.

Trolling patterns should be run parallel to submerged river channels, along the deeper edge of shallow flats, around shallow mid-lake humps, and along the deep riprap of causeways and dams.

Once a school is encountered, it may be possible to position the boat and cast jigs to the fish. However, during daylight hours these schools are usually moving and it may be hard to pinpoint this location for casting.

I like to catch white bass by casting, so I focus on fish feeding near the surface. Normally I stumble into feeding white bass schools while fishing for some other species.

If I'm properly equipped, I stop and enjoy catching as many as possible before the school sounds. But I always make a mental note of the location. The whites are following baitfish, and it's likely the bait is operating on a pattern that will bring them through the same spot again—often every day about the same time.

White bass attack forage because of vulnerability of the baitfish school at that particular spot. Perhaps there is a point, hump or ridge that forces the baitfish nearer the surface. Perhaps there is a hard turn in the weedbed that creates a pocket where white bass can corner the bait. There are many possibilities.

When I have established a list of probable white bass feeding sites, I'm ready for some fast action. With four or five spots in mind, I start fishing about 3 p.m. and run from one spot to another until dark.

I have at least two rods rigged with different lures. There's always a 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce soft plastic tube jig or Krystal Hair jig on one rod. Another rod has a small topwater bait or one of the new 4-inch soft jerkbaits.

Be constantly alert for surface disturbances that may indicate white bass busting baitfish on top. If the fish are up and feeding, a jig, topwater or jerkbait will take fish. It's your choice.

The truly exciting thing about summertime white bass fishing is working a school with one or two buddies to see how long you can keep the whites in a frenzy. White bass are so competitive that when one fish is hooked, others dart about as if trying to grab the bait from its mouth. If your partner casts

toward the hooked fish, a hookup with a second white is ensured.

Should the school be spooked after you catch a few fish, the challenge is to pull them back to the surface. There are several tricks that can draw fish into another frenzy.

My favorite approach is to fish a jig in an unconventional manner. Cast the jig toward deeper water or the direction the school was last seen. Let it sink almost to the bottom. Then crank the reel handle as fast as possible causing the jig to streak from deep water. Stop it before reaching the surface, and let it drop again, feeding line if necessary. Then streak it again.

If the water is clear, watch for white bass following the jig. Stop and start the jig to tease the fish into striking.

I also take a Rebel Pop R and tie an 18-inch piece of monofilament on the rear screw eye. Trim most of the lead off a 1/16-ounce jighead, insert inside a small tube jig, and tie it to the leader.

Cast this rig as far as possible and begin a very fast-pace chugging retrieve, splashing a lot of water. After 10 feet, stop to let the jig drop. Then begin the erratic retrieve again, stopping every 10 feet. The topwater noisemaker draws their attention, but the white bass will most likely strike the trailer jig.

Fall

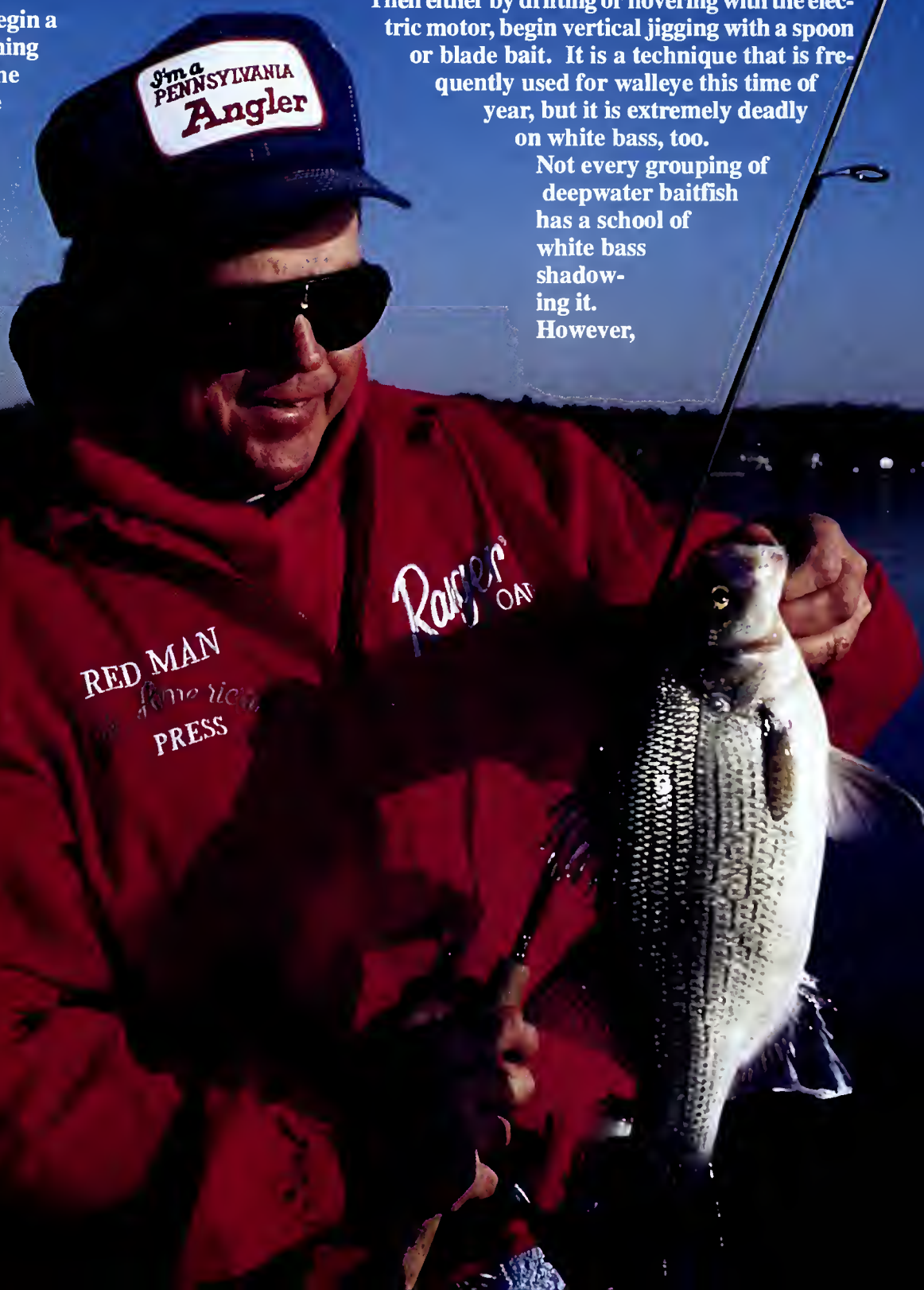
It is often said that fall is big bass time, referring to largemouth and smallmouth bass. But the same saying also applies to white bass. On shallow-water reservoirs, the white bass bite seems to end abruptly when the water temperature drops into the low 50s. However, on deepwater lakes white bass fishing is just reaching a peak in mid- to late October.

Deeper lakes take longer to cool, and the deeper water is not subject to the turmoil of fall storms as are shallower lakes. Deep is also where whites can be found by mid-October on Conneaut Lake—home to the last two state record white bass.

The search begins by surveying mid-lake humps near deepwater basins, as well as quick-breaking points that dump into deep water. Keep your eyes glued to the sonar for signs of baitfish activity in water from 25 to 35 feet deep. When you observe baitfish, throw out a marker.

Then either by drifting or hovering with the electric motor, begin vertical jigging with a spoon or blade bait. It is a technique that is frequently used for walleye this time of year, but it is extremely deadly on white bass, too.

Not every grouping of deepwater baitfish has a school of white bass shadowing it. However,





*You have the most fun
white bass fishing
when you match the
tackle to the fish.
Never go armed for
bear. Light is better.*

it does not take long to learn if you are on target. When whites are on a feeding spree down deep, things happen fast. Whites hit lures worked like injured baitfish with incredible force, much harder than walleyes or even muskies.

In a 30-minute period last October, Dave Hornstein caught and released over 20 white bass between 2 and 3 1/2 pounds on a blade bait while I shot film. By the time I got my line wet, the flurry was over.

Vertical jigging is simple. Free-spool the spoon or blade bait to the bottom. Engage the reel and take up enough line to bring the lure several feet off the bottom. Then begin a pumping motion, pulling the lure upward a few feet and letting it fall back until the line goes tight. Experiment to get the right cadence.

Because hard-metal jigging lures are heavier than other lures used for white bass, it is a good idea to jump up in rod power and line test a little. A medium/light rod with 8-pound or 10-pound test can handle the hardware.

Be sure to have a tight grip on your rod for this deepwater fall fishing. Although a walleye or musky may take a swipe at these lures, you'll have a harder time holding onto the rod when big white bass hit!



Pennsylvania's Best White Bass Waterways

Rivers

Allegheny (Below Kinzua Dam and
from Parker to Pittsburgh)

Monongahela River

Youghiogheny River

Ohio River

Beaver River (lower portion)

Ten Mile Creek

Crooked Creek Lake Tailrace

Loyalhanna Lake Tailrace

Ten Mile Creek

Lakes, reservoirs

Conneaut Lake

Pymatuning Reservoir

Shenango Reservoir

Kinzua Reservoir

Lake Erie

Presque Isle Bay

Eat or Release?

Many people say they do not like the flesh of white bass. This is probably caused by the manner in which the fish were handled.

If you intend to take white bass home for the dinner table, chill them immediately. Do not place them on a stringer or even in a livewell. Carry a cooler filled with ice; knock the fish out, bleed it, and place it on ice.

If you plan to release white bass, do it at the time the fish are caught. Do not place them in a livewell. Generally, white bass go belly-up in a livewell within minutes.

Eat or release—it's your choice, but don't waste them.—
DB.

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Bald Eagle BONANZA

by Ed Howey



photo-Ed Howey

From basic, easily reached approved trout water to wilderness trout streams accessible only on foot, the Bald Eagle region holds something for everyone.

Totaling 192,000 woodland acres in Pennsylvania's central highlands, the Bald Eagle State Forest region touches six counties—Centre, Clinton, Lycoming, Mifflin, Snyder and Union. The area boasts miles of varied trout water—it's a veritable trouting smorgasbord. From basic, easily reached approved trout water to wilderness trout streams accessible only on foot, the Bald Eagle region holds something for everyone from hopeful youngsters with cans of worms to savvy pros with boxes of flies.



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck



Scattered throughout the region, high on the slopes of Bald Eagle's old, weathered ridges, adventurous anglers can find yet another class of wild trout water—wilderness trout streams.

photo-Ed Jaworski

Approved trout waters

The approved trout waters designation proclaims water quality good enough to warrant stocking. Standard creel limits apply, a realistic regulation that recognizes the possibility that trout not harvested could perish during hot, dry summers. In years with normal rainfall and temperatures, however, some of these stocked trout may elude anglers, resulting in holdover populations and catches that sometimes surprise autumn aficionados. Many streams in the Bald Eagle area have excellent holdover capacity.

Buffalo Creek west of Mifflinburg and Middle Creek west of Middleburg are typical approved trout waters. Fish these valley floor streams with bait to harvest your share of the copious stocking program. Local roads off Route 45 provide access to Buffalo Creek. Middle Creek can be reached by local roads off Route 522.

Across the mountains to the northwest, two more valley streams beckon anglers. Sinking Creek, a tributary to Penns at Spring Mills, is reached off routes 45 and 144 approaching Old Fort. Little Fishing Creek, a tributary to Fishing Creek at Lamar, is accessible off Route 64 southwest of Lamar.

An important clue to good water is the imposition of special regulations on a section of a stream. The restrictions often apply only to a short stretch, leaving many miles of abundantly stocked water governed by standard regulations. A notable example is one of Pennsylvania's finest—Penns Creek.

The specially regulated no-kill zone includes only about four miles of Penns, leaving 10 miles above and 10 miles below that are not subject to special rules. Tucked away in these miles of open water lie dozens of fine pools, runs and riffles.

Last season, after coming up empty on the no-kill water during Green Drake season, a friend took me to a stretch of unrestricted water just above Weikert. A few fishermen had gathered there in anticipation of the tremendous fall Coffin flies at dusk, but there was plenty of room to fish. I still get goose bumps at the memory of line peeling off my reel as a bull-strong Penns Creek brownie took off downstream with my Coffin Fly fake in his jaw.

White Deer Creek in R.B. Winter State Park is another example. Fly-fishing-only rules apply to the upper three miles, but standard regulations prevail for some 20 miles downstream. Anglers looking for a wild and woodsy place to catch trout should follow secondary forest roads to the rhododendron-bordered and laurel-bordered waters of White Deer Creek.

Class A Wild Trout Water

Throughout the Bald Eagle region, research has identified waters good enough to support wild trout populations, and for several years such waters have received no hatchery trout. Furthermore, none of these high quality streams is subject to special rules, affirming the biologists' belief in the capacity of the waterways to sustain a healthy population of wild trout in the face of both angler and natural predation.

Some wild trout waters are small headwater sections buried deep in the woods, but others are good-sized streams in more accessible, open country. A noteworthy example, Clinton County's Fishing Creek, is wholly classified as wild trout except for the final five miles downstream from Cedar Springs. Special regulations apply only to the five-mile stretch through the Narrows from Tylersville to Lamar, leaving many miles of wild trout water subject only to standard regulations.

Gain access to the water below Lamar off Route 64. Above Tylersville, Route 880 parallels the stream for most of its course.

Another easily accessible stream, Elk Creek, a Pennsylvania limestone, is rated wild trout water over its entire length. The best stretch follows Route 445 into Millheim, then beyond to where it joins Pine Creek near Coburn.

Wilderness trout streams

Scattered throughout the region, high on the slopes of Bald Eagle's old, weathered ridges, adventurous anglers can find yet another class of wild trout water. Wilderness trout streams are distinct from Class A wild trout waters in that the former are reachable only if the angler is willing to take a hike through the woods. Typical of the class is Cherry Run, an icy freestoner that flows into Penns a half-mile upstream from the lower limit of the specially regulated section. A state forest secondary road takes the angler up the mountain to within hiking distance of the headwaters where beautiful wild brook and brown trout make a home.

Specially regulated waters

The Bald Eagle State Forest region holds some of the state's prime regulated water. Penns Creek, Fishing Creek, White Deer Creek and Spring Creek offer first class trout fishing for anglers seeking an ideal combination of stern challenges and impressive rewards.

Centre County's Spring Creek has been a bastion of trout fishing excellence for decades. The home of the renowned Fisherman's Paradise, the entire stream is now on no-kill regulations because of a disastrous pollution event in the 1970s. Outside of Fisherman's Paradise, all legal means may be used—fly, lure or bait—and anglers consistently report spectacular catches. Spring Creek passes through the village of Lemont a few miles northeast of State College. Follow local roads to stretches where landowners permit access or where public lands provide access.

The regulated section of Penns Creek, almost four miles of water coursing through roadless woodland, also enjoys a world-class reputation. Access is on foot from either end of the no-kill stretch. The upstream marker lies a few hundred yards from the Poe Paddy Picnic Area at the confluence of Swift Run. Gain entry at the downstream limit from a local road leading to a Commission-maintained parking area about a half-mile beyond Cherry Run. No-kill, artificial-lures-only rules have been in place long enough to produce sufficient numbers of 20-inch brown trout, so an encounter with one is a distinct possibility.

In Union County's R.B. Winter State Park, White Deer Creek offers a different look at Pennsylvania's diversified regulation program. Restricted to flies-only angling, 2.5 miles of White Deer downstream from the Union/Centre County line are classified as delayed-harvest waters, no-kill from March 1 to June 15 and three 9-inch fish daily thereafter.

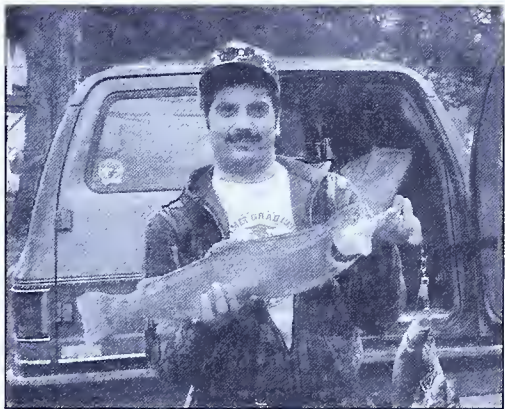
Finally, a mountain limestone of indisputable quality. Fishing Creek tumbles five miles through The Narrows between Tylersville and Lamar, pausing along the way to form deep pools among great boulders where trophy trout lurk. Classified as a Trophy Trout Project, a 14-inch minimum size is in effect, creel limit two per day, and only artificial lures and flies are permitted.

This summer, help yourself to a heaping portion of the Bald Eagle trout fishing bonanza.

Cast and Caught



Dan DePalma, of Cranberry, took this nice largemouth bass out of Stoneboro Lake last September. The fish was kept alive and Dan later released it in a farm pond to fight another day.



North Braddock resident Bill Fazio landed this nice rainbow trout with his first cast on the opening day of the 1993 trout season. The fish, caught in Woodcock Creek, Crawford County, was 26 inches long and weighed 6 pounds, 12 ounces. Great job, Bill!



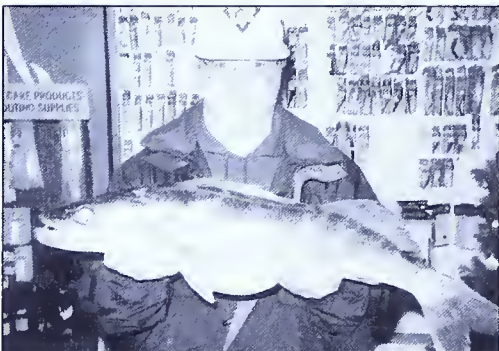
Sean Patti of White Hall fooled this five-pound, three-ounce largemouth bass. The bass measured 20 inches and the action took place in Hokendauqua Creek.



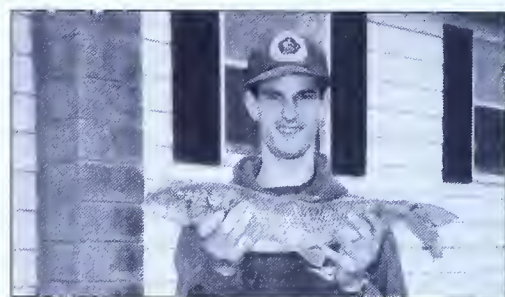
Vincent Bartz, 3 1/2, of Pittsburgh, shows off his first smallmouth bass. Vincent caught the 14 1/2-inch bass on a crayfish last July at Dotters Run in Venango County. Dad, Jeffrey, who is justifiably proud of his little angling partner, snapped the photograph.



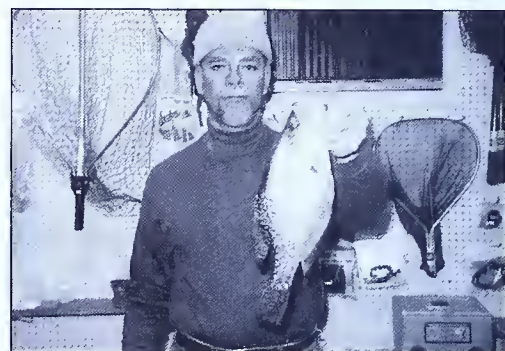
Duane Gleason, of Allentown, used a jig to catch this rainbow trout. The Switzer Creek fish weighed 5 pounds, 15 ounces and was 23 1/2 inches long.



Pittsburgh resident Ray Dalmaso was fishing the Freeport Pool of the Allegheny River when this hefty walleye grabbed his lure. The fish measured 30 inches and was 11 pounds, 12 ounces.



Ricky Hersh, Jr., of Tioga, earned a Senior Angler's Award for this sucker he caught while fishing Tioga Lake. The fish measured 21 inches in length and weighed 4 pounds, 8 ounces.



Whitehall resident Rodney Piovesan caught this crappie last March. The Lake Ontelaunee fish weighed 1 pound, 15 ounces and was 14 1/2 inches long.



Henry Brosch, of Johnstown, caught this nice brook trout hybrid while fishing the Loyahanna last January. The fish weighed 5.21 pounds and measured 24 1/2 inches long.



Jerome Piazza, of Kingston, was fishing Harris Pond in Luzerne County when this chain pickerel grabbed his bait. The fish measured 24 3/4 inches long and weighed 4 pounds, 12 ounces.

Cast and Caught



Sixteen-year-old Micah Martin, of Julian, was fishing Six Mile Run in Centre County when this nice rainbow trout attacked his bait. The fish weighed 7 pounds and measured 29 1/2 inches long. Nice going, Micah!



Washington resident Charles Rogers, Sr., caught and released this freshwater drum while fishing at Ten Mile Creek, Greene County. The fish was 29 inches long and weighed in at 7 pounds, 15 ounces. Nice job, Charles!



Bloomsburg residents Scott and Mark Creasy were fishing in the Susquehanna River when this giant muskellunge struck their lure. The fish, hauled in on 10-pound-test line, was 48 inches long and 35 pounds. Great job, guys!



Richard L. Cunningham of Kittanning took this nice walleye out of the Allegheny River in Armstrong County. He duped the eight-pound, two-ounce fish with a jointed minnow plug. The walleye measured 28 inches long.



DuBois resident Brad Dodd was fishing the Allegheny River when this rainbow trout attacked his bait. The fish weighed in at 5.97 pounds and measured 25 1/4 inches.



Fourteen-year-old Jeffrey Zeak, of Hollidaysburg, has a lot to be proud of with this 11-pound, five-ounce walleye. Jeff nailed the 'eye in Canoe Creek Lake, Blair County, last May. He caught the 30-inch fish on a spinner. Nice fish, Jeff!

Kray Paints 1994 Trout and Salmon Stamp Artwork

Bob Kray's original acrylic rendering of a brook trout was selected to appear on the Commission's 1994 trout and salmon permit. A panel of judges chose the winning artwork in June among 44 entries. In addition to the stamp, the painting will also appear on a series of limited edition prints.

Kray, who has been painting since the age of 12, studied art at the Philadelphia College of Art. He has taught at Luzerne County Community College for 11 years and was active in the printing industry for 19 years.

The 1994 trout and salmon stamps will be available to the public on December 1, 1993.



Bob Kray



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Angler's Notebook *by David A. Wonderlich*

As summer progresses, there is usually less food in the water for fish to eat. Terrestrial, or land-based insects, become a dominant food. Crickets, grasshoppers, ants, beetles and leafhoppers provide good eating for fish as well as excellent bait (or ideas for imitations) for the fisherman.

When stream water rises during and after a summer's rain, fish go on a feeding binge. Minnows, worms, flies and lures all work well because the offering appears to be food washed or blown into the creek by the storm. Larger leaders and hooks as well as a closer approach to the fish can be used for both trout and bass in the higher, roiled water.

Whether fishing for trout, bass or panfish, insects dropping from overhanging tree branches are a major summertime food source. A delicate cast beneath a tree branch with a small terrestrial (ant, inch worm, caterpillar) or its imitation can bring an instant strike.

The area between a backwater eddy and the faster main current is a prime spot for fooling smallmouth bass. Cast into the faster current and bring your wiggling minnow or its imitation to the top of the eddy, where the bass wait in ambush.

Pike are voracious, opportunistic feeders that have the reputation of going off their feed during the hotter summer months. The mouths of streams after a rain provide cooler temperatures for predators along with an increased chance for food to be washed into the deeper water by the current. Even though it's summer, try a big minnow, lure or streamer and work it as if it were trying to escape—and keep a good grip on your fishing pole.

Put a few good-sized pieces of cardboard, with a stone or two on top of each so they don't blow away, on the grass in a field. When you go back the next day, beneath each cardboard will be several black crickets waiting to be used as bait.

For great bass action, try fishing the white fly hatch of the Susquehanna River. Bass gorge themselves on this prolific fly, which sometimes blankets the surface of the water. Late afternoon and early evening are the best times to fool the fish because the numbers of flies on the water are not yet heavy and bass are still feeding on individual insects. Try any white fly pattern in size 10 or 12.

Low water is still a great time to learn a stream. The pockets, ledges, undercuts and tub-sized pools you find on the bottom tell you where fish lie and feed when the water is high and swift.

Spinner fishermen can score on trout when the water is low and clear by shifting to smaller lures and finer line. With a careful approach and delicate, fly-like cast, the angler using these minute spinners can catch trout when and where it was thought only the fly fisherman using midges could entice a strike.

illustration- Ted Walke

On the Water

with Dave Wolf

Those That Got Away

I remember them the most—those fish that got away. They remain as trophies that should have or at least could have been—fish I would have released, but that gained their freedom on their own.

The very first trout I ever hooked nearly got away. It happened at Fisherman's Paradise when I was six. At that time the Commission stocked outsized trout and there was a starting and finishing time. The Centre County stream was quite an attraction and anglers came from far and wide to test their luck. My first trout took a "puff ball"—a chunk of yarn on a hook—an hour after I began fishing. I do not recall setting the hook and I was more than surprised to see a rainbow wildly leaping over the flow.

As to be expected from a six-year-old who had had one too many candy bars, I simply slung the rod over my shoulder and ran up the hill behind me. Eight-pound test and a lot of luck brought the plump 17 1/2-inch rainbow skittering across the water like a surfboard. I stopped running a foot too soon—when I turned around the rainbow was floundering just off shore in an inch or two of water.

I remember the twisting fish and the hook coming loose, and I vaguely recall the head-first dive from atop the small hill into the water where I was able to wrestle the fish and hang on. I came from the stream dripping wet, hugging the still flailing trout, much to the delight and laughter of the crowd that had gathered. I was proud of that fish and the moment is akin to recovering a fumble on a muddy field during the Super Bowl.

The big ones that got away still haunt me. The large brown trout at Stevenson Dam in Cameron County, an unexpected fish in late July, took the fly I had been using in search of bluegills. The trout took so hard that it nearly pulled the rod from my hand and then ran for the other side of the lake. Despite the fact that the reel was screaming, I was in control until he turned and headed for the john boat. I could not reel the slack in fast enough with the single-action reel. When I finally did, the fish was gone and I shook like a maple leaf in late fall during gale force winds.

There was also the musky at the mouth of the creek that fed the Susquehanna River. I saw him roll, and then the leaping of baitfish. I tied a saltwater streamer to the end of my fly line and quickly stripped the line. The line stopped and the fish rolled like a heavy water-soaked log and then we quickly parted company—the musky with my best attempt at a well-tied saltwater streamer and me with a line cut like it had used scissors.

There was that day on a Lake Erie tributary stream when a steelhead took my wooly bugger and then swam beneath a grapevine. There I was, all thumbs, trying to remove the line from beneath the grapevine when the reel stopped singing, I looked upstream to see a gigantic steelhead leaping clear of the water three pools above me.

There was the largemouth bass that looked like an Indian Echo Cavern as it came from beneath the lily pads to try to inhale my popping bug. I say "tried" because I yanked so violently that the bass never had a chance to close its mouth on the bug, and I nearly fell out of the boat—funny now, but heartbreaking then.

There was a large northern pike that had taken my Little Cleo in the weed-choked shallows. I yanked and tugged the fish's awesome body to the boat, believing I had hooked the largest mess of weeds in the lake. I finally leaned over the boat to look down at the largest pike I had ever seen, lazily finning its tail as if it were bored with the whole affair. My partners in the boat were a little more than wide-eyed when they saw the large fish, and looked for a large landing net with the preposterous notion that they would scoop it out of six feet of water. I pressured the fish until it decided that the far side of the lake might be a better place and took off like a Patriot missile. The spool emptied and the 12-pound test parted with the sound of a .22 rifle going off.

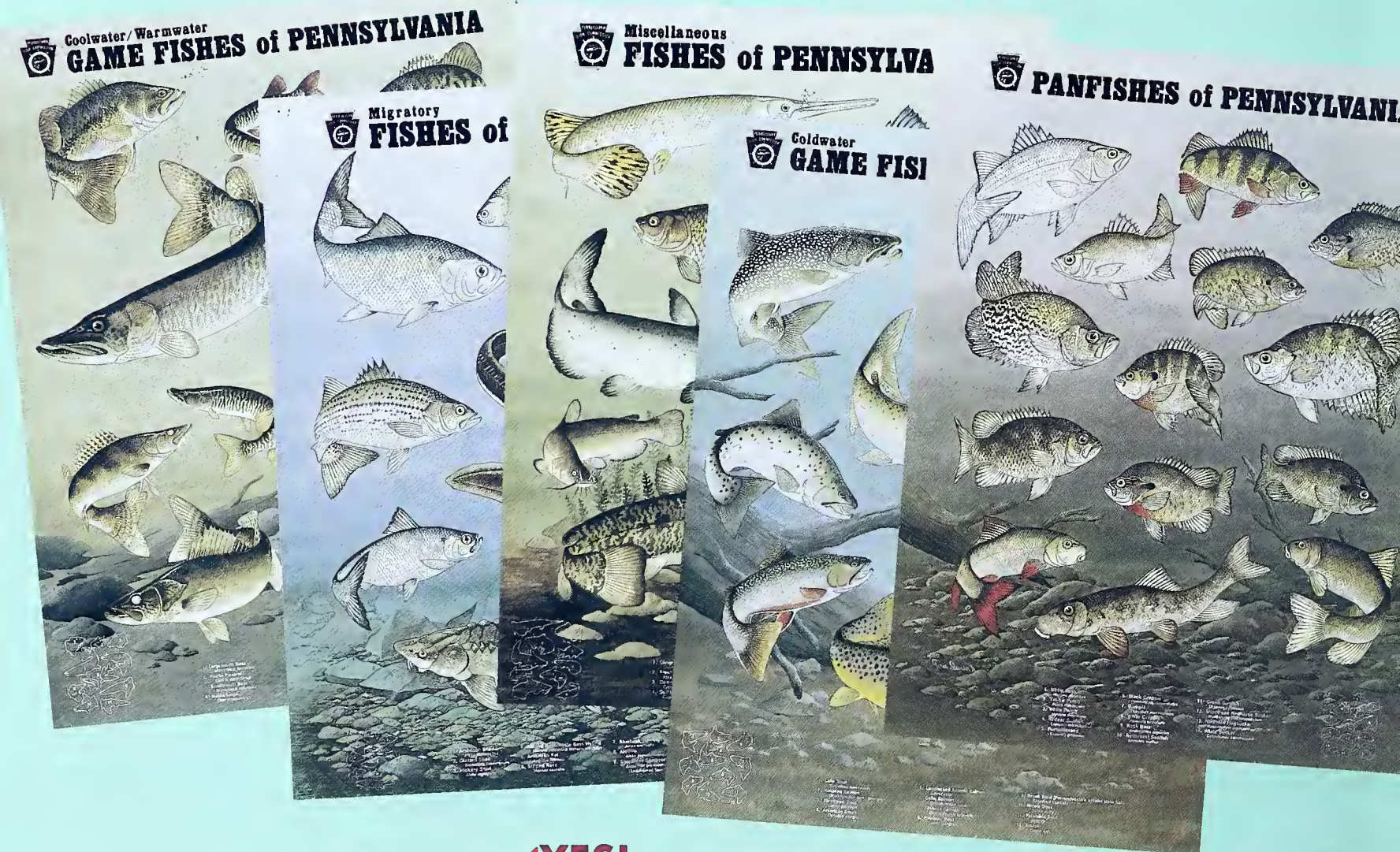
There was also a large channel catfish that had taken my white wulff long after dark. I stood in the currents of the Susquehanna for a good hour playing cat and mouse with this large, unseen fish. It would take line and I would gain it back; it tried going down river and then up and then down again and then across the river to the east side and then to the west. My arms and my resolve were weakening, and the fish was losing strength in the current. The line went slack and I waded from the river in the darkness, wondering how big it really was and if I would ever again hook one as large.

There was the pleasant day on a charterboat on Lake Erie. The rod popping up, the strength of the fish telegraphed through the rod. Bob Chandler, of the Erie Chamber of Commerce, offering advice and encouragement—the large steelhead suspended above the water in full view of all those on board. The fish is still frozen in my mind, as were the *oohs* and *ahs*, the twisting fish throwing the hook and the sounds of disappointment from a cast of anglers. It isn't fun to lose fish in front of a crowd—something like missing a two-foot putt on the last hole of the Masters.

But despite the disappointments, those lost trophies only whet my appetite. They encourage me and give me certainty that truly large fish exist out there on all kinds of water. They are called different names and come in all shapes and sizes. They are trophies of more than just the mind. I think they come to reassure us that they do indeed exist and to keep us going back for yet another chance to reel in that trophy of a lifetime. Besides, they make for good conversation wherever anglers gather, each with a story to tell and all make me want to fish more often and with more determination.

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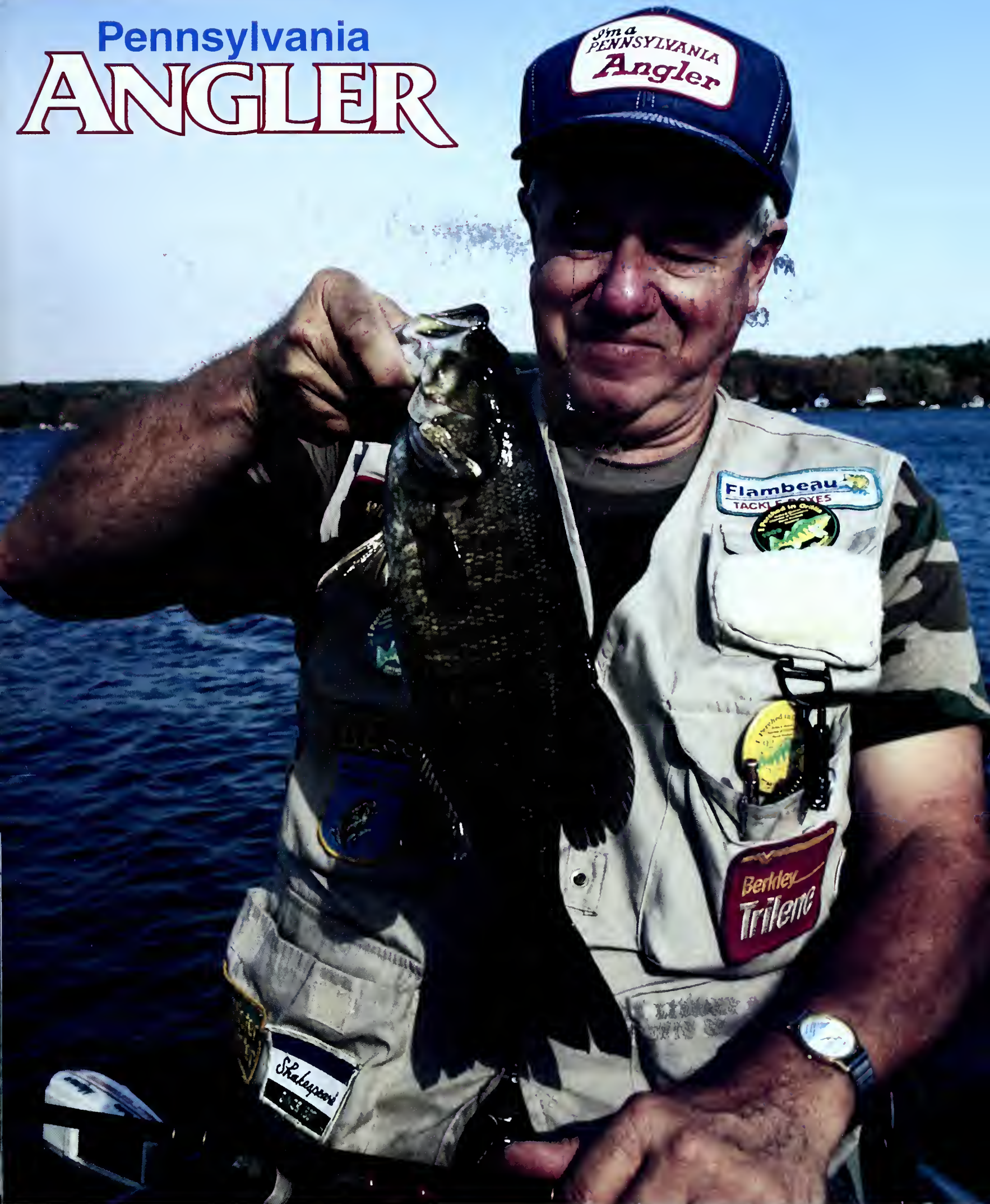
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June 5 and 6 *Fish-for-Free Days*

Straight Talk

Angler Support Needed

Thirty years ago, the Pennsylvania General Assembly created a senior fishing license that could be purchased by anglers 65 years of age or older at a cost of \$2.00. This fee has not changed in that period of time. Fifteen years ago, the legislature created a senior lifetime license at a one-time purchase price of \$10.00. This fee has remained the same for 15 years.

Eleven years ago, the present resident license fee of \$12.00 was established by the lawmakers, and remains the same today.

During the years these fees have remained stable, the consumer price index, which is the best known indicator of inflationary cost increases, has risen significantly, nearly 50 percent in the past 11 years alone.

The Commission has worked very hard to keep angler licensing costs at the lowest possible levels during these past years. Improved techniques and equipment, better employee training, enlightened management practices, upgrading of propagation stations and other facilities, and a whole host of other changes have enabled the Commission to contain program cost increases below inflation rates. Other helpful factors include increases in federal (D-J/Wallop-Breaux) funding allotments, implementation of the trout/salmon permit to help meet the upgrading and operating costs of our agency coldwater production facilities, and a slight increase in license sales.

Expansion of some of the most popular programs, continued acquisition and development of public access facilities, broadened Adopt-a-Stream efforts, protection of our natural aquatic resources and fish populations, implementation of popular and innovative fishing regulations, and other costly efforts to maintain and expand fishing and boating opportunities have also been accomplished during this long period of stable license fees.

On April 26, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission asked staff to initiate legislative action to increase Fish Fund revenues by adjusting the license fee structure. This action, which was unanimously approved, is understood by the vast majority of Pennsylvania anglers who realize that the Commission and its programs are faced with the same inflationary cost increases that affect all businesses and individuals. Responsible anglers also have indicated their willingness to pay a fair price for their fishing recreation. They are quick to compare the annual cost of fishing (\$17.00 for a license and a trout/salmon permit) to a day on the ski slopes (\$30.00 and up), or a four-hour round of golf (\$20.00 and up, plus cart), and they recognize that fishing provides a lot of recreation for the dollar. They also are willing to contribute to the Commission's extremely important role in protecting and enhancing our streams, lakes and waterways, a role that often goes unnoticed by many anglers and much of the non-participating public.

The Commission recognizes that it faces hard fiscal times and a difficult legislative battle to increase fishing license fees. However, the Commission is now required to spend more Fish Fund money each year than revenue received just to maintain current programs. In addition, the Commission has recently been advised that federal funds will be reduced by \$365,000 this year, and that the Commission faces changes in federal accounting procedures that could further reduce federal money by nearly \$250,000 per year.

The Commission needs the support of Pennsylvania anglers if it is to continue current programs, expand efforts in critical program and population areas, and hold its position as one of the finest fishery programs in the 50 states. Can we count on your help?



Edward R. Miller, P.E.

Executive Director

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

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PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Backpackin' to Pennsylvania Bass Ponds by Mike Bleech

If you look carefully, you can probably find a bass puddle practically in your own backyard.....4

Northwest Pennsylvania's Best Trout Fishing by Bob Petri

A half-dozen gems in northwest Pennsylvania hold ample populations of stocked trout now. The author explains where the best action is and how to score with everything from flies to bait.....7

The Highlands Bass of Youghiogheny Lake by Jeff Knapp

Youghiogheny Lake is a quality bass fishery, one that's been steadily improving during recent years.....10

Penns After the Coffin Fly by Ed Howey

If you think the action on Penns Creek slows by June, guess again. Trout can be fooled, and the lower reaches offer fine smallmouth bass fishing.....14

21 Tips for Catching Big Pennsylvania Largemouths by Darl Black

Everyone wants to catch a big bass. These 21 specific ideas can give you the edge in Pennsylvania.....16

An Hour from Lancaster by Ed Howey

Check out the great fishing around this city.....20

A Guide to State-Line Smallies by Tom Fegely

The Delaware River has no closed season on smallmouth and largemouth bass. Your chances of scoring on the Big D increase when you use these ideas.....22

On the Water with Dave Wolf

The smallmouth of a river.....31

Pattern Selection Chart by Charles R. Meck

These fly selections can help you zero in on the patterns that work best.....32

The covers

On this issue's cover, Pennsylvania angler Dale DuPont, Cochran, shows the nice bass he caught in northwest Pennsylvania. Darl Black took the photograph. This month, the regular bass season opens, so check out how to increase your success and where to score. On page 4, Mike Bleech explains how to find a few hidden bass-fishing gems, and on page 10, Jeff Knapp shows how to catch bass in Youghiogheny Lake. Essential reading for bass anglers begins on page 16 with Darl Black's 21 specific tips on how to catch big Pennsylvania bass. On page 22, Tom Fegely explains how to catch bass in the Delaware River. The Big D is a good choice for anglers who can't wait for bass season's opening day, because largemouth bass and smallmouth bass season is open year-round on the Delaware.

Trout anglers should check out Bob Petri's article on page 7 to discover northwest Pennsylvania's best June trout fishing, and if you like to fish for trout and bass, Ed Howey explains where and how on page 14.

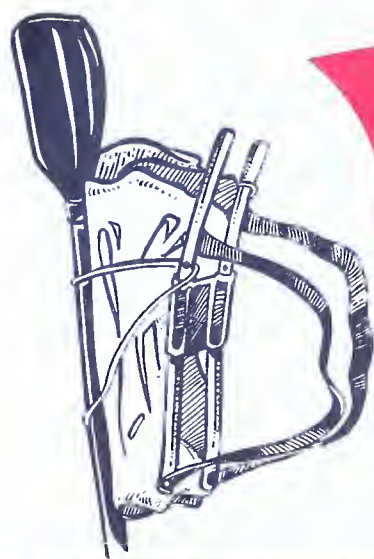
June 5 and 6 are this year's Fish-for-Free Days. Sizes, creel limits and all other regulations apply, but one doesn't need a fishing license to fish on these days. Fish-for-Free Days offer an excellent opportunity to introduce a friend to fishing.

Lastly, check out this issue's back cover—something every fly angler will want to cut out and use astream.

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Backpackin' to **PENNSYLVANIA BASS PONDS**

by Mike Bleech

We all get a bit disgusted from time to time about fishing pressure, about having to share a lake with water skiers, speedboaters and crowds of other anglers. The only solution to this problem is to get away from it all. But where? To some far off Canadian or South American lake? Sure, that would be great. But it isn't always possible. As a matter of fact, for most of us it is hardly ever possible. So are we stuck with fighting the traffic to wet our lines? No way!

Some summers back when I was bogged down in such a mood I got a call from my brother-in-law, Jim, asking me to bring my canoe for some interesting bass fishing. We drove over a few miles of back roads, not all that far from town, and then we turned onto a single-lane road with mud puddles that could float a battleship. A half-mile down that road my brother-in-law directed me to turn into a hay field.

"No sweat, I know the guy," Jim said when I questioned driving off the road.

A tractor path led us along the edge of the field, through a steep 15-foot-deep ditch I thought we would never get through, to a narrow trail. Jim pointed to the trail. Brush scraped both sides of the pick-up, knocking both rear-view mirrors against the doors.

"I don't think this is a road," I said to Jim.

"Never said it was," he replied.

The trail ended at a wall of thick brush. We climbed out of the truck and put our fishing gear into the canoe. Then Jim pushed aside a bush and led the way, carrying the bow. I still did not know what was ahead. The ground became increasingly wet, to the point at which it became downright swampy. Finally I shoved my way through one last leafy bush, and there before me was the nicest-looking bass water I had ever seen.

It sprawled through the rolling landscape in a way that no matter where you were, you could not see all of its 30-odd acres at once. Rotting trees broke the surface like giant beard stubble. Turtles sunbathed on the dead tree tops that had fallen into the pond. All of the bottom except for the creek channels and the deepest part of the lake was covered with patchy weed beds.

Fishing was good, but challenging. We worked our plastic worms and surface lures along a creek channel, to a high beaver dam that had first created the lake long ago. There in the deep water we endured lessons in humility by a couple of big bucketmouths. The day went quickly. Before I even thought about the time, the sun had disappeared and wood ducks were whisking through the tree tops, returning from their daily foraging, splashing down unseen.

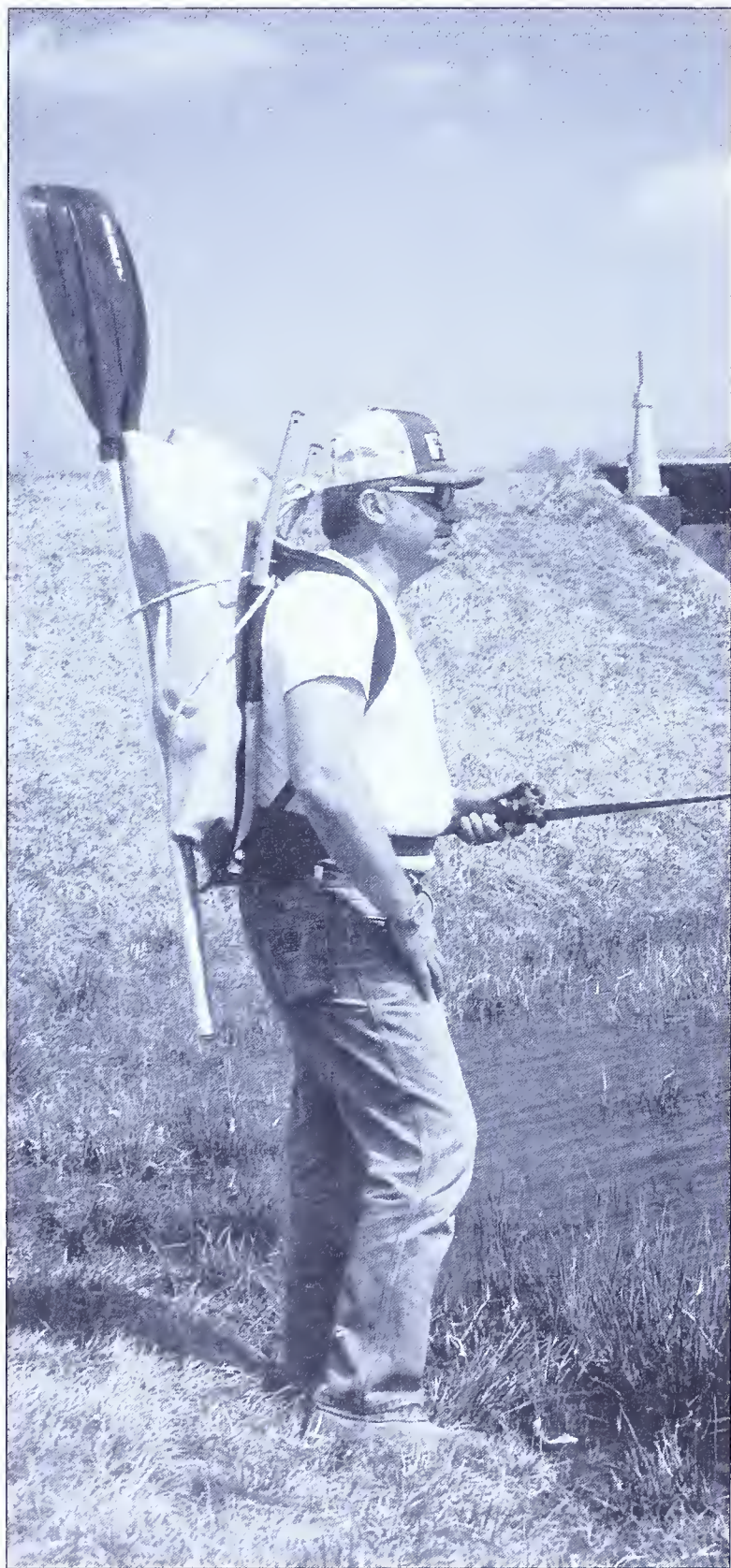


photo: Mike Bleech



Adventure is wherever you find it. If you are willing to look, if you are imaginative, if you are a good investigator, you can probably find bass fishing adventures right under your nose.

Topo maps

Start by scanning topographic maps. An adventurer has to know how to read maps. Get the most recent topo maps that are available. Look for the revision date in the lower right corner. Many ponds have been built within the last decade or two. Many others escape notice, by most folks at least, for centuries.

Perhaps if you are very lucky your brother-in-law or some other fishing buddy will share the location of a secret bass pond with you, but don't hold your breath. You will likely have to locate these gems on your own, or with the help of a fellow adventurous spirit.

Here in Pennsylvania, the Game Commission has constructed numerous ponds for wildlife habitat. Beavers are constantly making ponds. Farmers and ranchers build ponds. There are meander ponds scattered along the valleys of some rivers. Rock quarry ponds are common in some areas.

Naturally or otherwise, bass get into many of these ponds, but not all of them, mind you. You will come to some dead ends in this quest.

Even while bass in nearby lakes are decimated by heavy fishing pressure, these bass thrive and many grow very big for one reason: Fishing for them takes too much effort for most anglers. These fish aren't fast-growing bass, because the calorie-packing schools

of shad do not inhabit these small waters. They just get older because they escape notice, and the anglers who do find them tend to be the kind who know how to keep a good thing going.

Conservation concern

Bass ponds are fragile! A couple of competent anglers could ruin one in a season if they were piggish. Largemouth bass are aggressive fish, especially so in ponds because food is harder to catch. If you try to feed your neighborhood from the pond, the fun will soon end. Limit your take to the bass that are hooked severely, or perhaps to a rare wallhanger, and you might have a lifetime of fun from that one secluded pond.

Strategy adjustments

A 150-horsepower, tournament-fishing, electro-angler will face culture shock trying to fish a pack-in pond. Even if you air-lifted your bass boat onto the pond, there wouldn't be enough room to get it on plane.

The strategic objective of this kind of fishing is exactly the same as bass fishing anywhere else—to be prepared for any situation. But with pack-in pond bass fishing you can't solve the problem by carrying at least a half-dozen of everything in the mail order catalog. You have to be clever instead. You are limited to just what you can carry, which is a matter of both weight and bulk.

Are you content to fish from the bank, or do you want more mobility? In any water where I can not adequately fish every place from shore, I want some kind of boat.

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO LOOK, IF YOU ARE IMAGINATIVE, IF YOU ARE A GOOD INVESTIGATOR, YOU CAN PROBABLY FIND BASS FISHING ADVENTURES RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE.

A canoe or some other kind of lightweight boat provides the most stable fishing platform. But a canoe is awkward to carry. To some extent, any pond without a launch ramp gets less fishing pressure than any water the high-powered electro-bass crowd can get to. The more remote it is, the harder it is to reach, the better the bass fishing will be, all other things being equal. So the better ponds are typically the ones that you would rather not hike to with a canoe on your shoulders.

My favorite pack-in bass pond during the past few years is a mile-and-a-half from where I park the brown van, so I bought an inflatable boat just to fish there. Though it is a sturdy model, it is still only about two-thirds as heavy as my canoe. And it is a lot more manageable in the brush. Tied to a lightweight pack frame, I can get the inflatable boat just about anywhere, no matter how far I have to hike from the nearest road. It's a four-man size, which is about right for two anglers. A two-man size would be adequate for one angler, and would be a far better choice if you fish alone because it is lighter and less bulky.

Two-angler expeditions are generally more efficient than one-angler treks. The inflatable boat and paddles are a good load for one person, whether you have a two-man boat or a four-man boat. A second angler can carry PFDs, lunch and fishing tackle. A lone angler must shoulder the entire burden, putting serious limitations on tackle.

Tackle

My pack-in bass tackle box probably contains enough lures for any bass fishing trip, but in terms of contemporary bass fishing strategies, it is going light. Looking into it you would truly see the lures that give me confidence. Many times bass anglers have been asked which lures they would use if they were limited to some specific small amount. But the answers are just speculative. When the tackle is narrowed down for a rigorous pack-in trip, it is for real!

My pack-in bass tackle box contains:

- A small assortment of 6-inch to 8-inch plastic worms, some black grape and some blue, maybe one other color that strikes my fancy.
- A dozen or more plastic worm hooks and a small assortment of bullet weights.
- Two or three spinnerbaits, one a double-bladed model, the others single-bladed, one white, one chartreuse, and one with some blue in it.
- Three weedless jigs, one each black, purple and brown.
- A jar of mixed pork trailers, including a few frogs and Ripple Rinds.
- A couple of weedless topwater lures, one noisy and one quiet.
- Two or three popping bugs.
- A floating minnow lure, maybe two, at least one in natural shiner color.
- A few deep-diving crankbaits, one fire tiger and one natural color, if the pond I am fishing has enough deep water to warrant it.
- Soft-plastic jig bodies, natural colors and chartreuse, and some 1/8-ounce and 1/4-ounce lead heads.

LIMIT YOUR TAKE TO THE BASS THAT ARE HOOKED SEVERELY, OR PERHAPS TO A RARE WALLHANGER, AND YOU MIGHT HAVE A LIFETIME OF FUN FROM THAT ONE SECLUDED POND.

- Bass scent.

- A few tiny panfish jigs, in case I run into big bluegills or crappies.

I feel compelled to carry two rods. I simply can't get by with only one. A spinning rod is usually rigged with either a plastic worm, a floating minnow lure, or a jig. I carry two spools for the spinning reel, one loaded with 8-pound-test line, the other with 12-pound-test line. A levelwind casting outfit is usually rigged with a spinnerbait, or a weedless topwater lure. The reel is spooled with 10-pound to 14-pound line, depending more on my mood than on anything more important.

I would rather carry one-piece rods, if possible, because they are more sensitive than two-piece rods. Everything, though, must be judged by its value versus the trouble of carrying it.

Other essential items in my gear are a camera, lunch, something to drink, matches, a topo map, insect repellent, and sunscreen.

My fishing partners and I do not fish just for the fishing. We get everything possible out of a pack-in expedition. This includes a rather

fancy shore lunch, and time for observing nature. Our objective does not include trying to prove how tough we are. We are there for the fun.

Structure, cover

Lessons about structure and cover come vividly alive in a pond. Even though you probably will not have a sonar unit, in the small confines of a pond you should be able to deduce the bottom configuration by studying the surrounding landscape, and by working lures on the bottom of the pond. You should be able to create a mental picture of what the pond looks like if the water were drained. You might even find a topo map made before the pond was created, or see the pond while the water is drawn down.

One of the biggest advantages of fishing ponds over larger bodies of water is that in a pond you have time to try everything. Start shallow, working visible cover, and then move toward deeper water, trying everything in your bag of tricks.

During summer the bass are likely spread around the pond, and a few different fishing patterns might all work at the same time. You might get the first bass from a shallow weed patch on a snagless topwater lure, the next one near a rotting tree trunk on a plastic worm, and the next on a jig in the sunken creek channel. Don't be too quick to think you have established a pattern, because the only pattern might be no pattern. However, the largest bass in the pond are usually close to deep water.

During spring and fall, often practically all of the active bass in the pond are in one small area, reacting to one fishing pattern. During early spring the bass might be stacked in the warmest water, against a windblown shoreline, or in a shallow bay. You should include a thermometer in your gear during spring, and if all else fails, spend your time in the warmest water. During fall the bass will likely be close to the deepest water in the pond, if not right in it.

Use these ideas to explore the world of backpackin' bass and to discover a few new bass hotspots. Remember to release your catch in these small, fragile waterways. The hotspots are out there, waiting for you to find them.

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Northwest Pennsylvania's **BEST TROUT FISHING**

by Bob Petri



The arrival of June serves as the unofficial end of trout season for many anglers, particularly in northwest Pennsylvania, where excellent warmwater fishing draws area anglers away from the region's trout waters. Many of these anglers believe that most of the stocked trout of spring have been cropped, and that it's time to move on to the greener pastures of the warmwater bounty of the northwest.

The truth is another matter. Many streams of the northwest hold excellent populations of stocked trout well into summer. June is the "bridge" month between the cool northwest Pennsylvania spring and the doldrums of summer. It's also a great time to sample these streams that most other anglers have left behind for another year. Here is a representative sampler of a half-dozen of the best of these waters. All offer worthwhile fishing through June.

Even as the crowds of June converge on area lakes in pursuit of bass and bluegills, many streams of the northwest hold excellent populations of stocked trout well into summer.

Thompson Creek

This waterway is a moderate-sized stream that flows out of the hills of southeastern Crawford County to meet Oil Creek at the village of Hydetown. The lower three miles of the stream from the mouth at Hydetown up to the State Route 2031 bridge are stocked before and during the season with brown trout and rainbow trout.

In June, bypass the lower third of the stream because it is predominantly shallow with minimal holding water for trout, and prone to rapid warming. Travel upstream instead to the section where Thompson Creek meets McLaughlin Creek about one mile off Route 8 on State Route 1013. Parking is available here at the bridge on McLaughlin Creek, and a short hike across a meadow puts you on Thompson Creek.

The section of Thompson above the McLaughlin junction is made for bait and spin fishermen. The stream is brushy and narrow in spots with lots of undercut banks and downed timber to provide trout cover. Stay back from the bank and drift a nightcrawler through the deep pools and log jams.

Spin fishermen should concentrate on the undercuts, and retrieve upstream casts through likely holding water. In low, clear water, try a spinner with a minimum of flash in colors like copper or

black. In normal flows, gold and silver spinners are a better choice.

This section of Thompson carries an ample number of holdover trout, so be ready. On a late June outing last year, a beautiful 18-inch holdover brown left the safety of its log jam to smash my spinner.

Thompson Creek has a reputation as one of the premier fly fishing streams in the area, and rightfully so. Try the upper section of the stocked water that begins at the bridge on Finney Road and continues upstream to the State Route 2031 bridge. Here you will find a string of fairly deep pools linked by sections of productive pocket water. Many of the major mayfly hatches can be found here.

If the spring has been cool, the early June angler on Thompson can count on good hatches of Green Drakes and Gray Foxes, as well as a variety of the pale mayflies we collectively call sulphurs in sizes 14 through 18. A warmer spring sets the stage for evening hatches of Light Cahills. A fishable *Tricorythodes* hatch starts on Thompson in late June. Be prepared with long leaders tapering to 6X and size 22 *Trico* spinner imitations.

Pine Creek

There are many streams across the Commonwealth that carry this name, but this northwest Pennsylvania version is among the best. Pine begins as a small mountain stream near Seldom Seen in southwest Warren County, and flows for 12 miles through dense forest and the relics of the Pennsylvania oil boom to meet Oil Creek near Drake Well just south of Titusville. Along the way, it grows to formidable size, averaging 50 to 60 feet wide near the mouth.

All of Pine Creek can offer good fishing over stocked browns through June, but the best water is from the junction with Caldwell Creek upstream to the upper stocking limit at Seldom Seen. This section has excellent shading and cool water temperatures with many long, deep pools to explore.

Access to the upper reaches of Pine is generally adequate. The section near the Caldwell junction can be reached from dirt roads that leave Route 27 at Dotyville and Mount Hope. At the village of Enterprise, Pine makes a loop and crosses State Route 3002 and Route 27 both within a quarter-mile section to provide excellent access.

Above Enterprise, Pine flows away from the road through a hemlock-shrouded valley. There is bridge access to this remote section on Township Road 309, and again on Township Road 313 at Seldom Seen. Hiking down into the sections between these bridges offers some of the best fishing on Pine.

June baitfishing on Pine can be challenging in low water. Redworms and various land-based insects on light-wire hooks

can be effective. However, keep a low profile and approach from the trout's blind side. Stay back from the bank and use long casts to drape your offering over the grassy banks and log jams.

Pine offers the fly angler numerous hatches to look forward to in June. In the beginning of the month there are Green Drakes and Sulfurs on the water. Mid-June evenings are highlighted by Light Cahills in sizes 12 and 14. Anytime is a good time to prospect with an Adams or Elk Hair Caddis in sizes 14 through 18.

Upper Two Mile Run

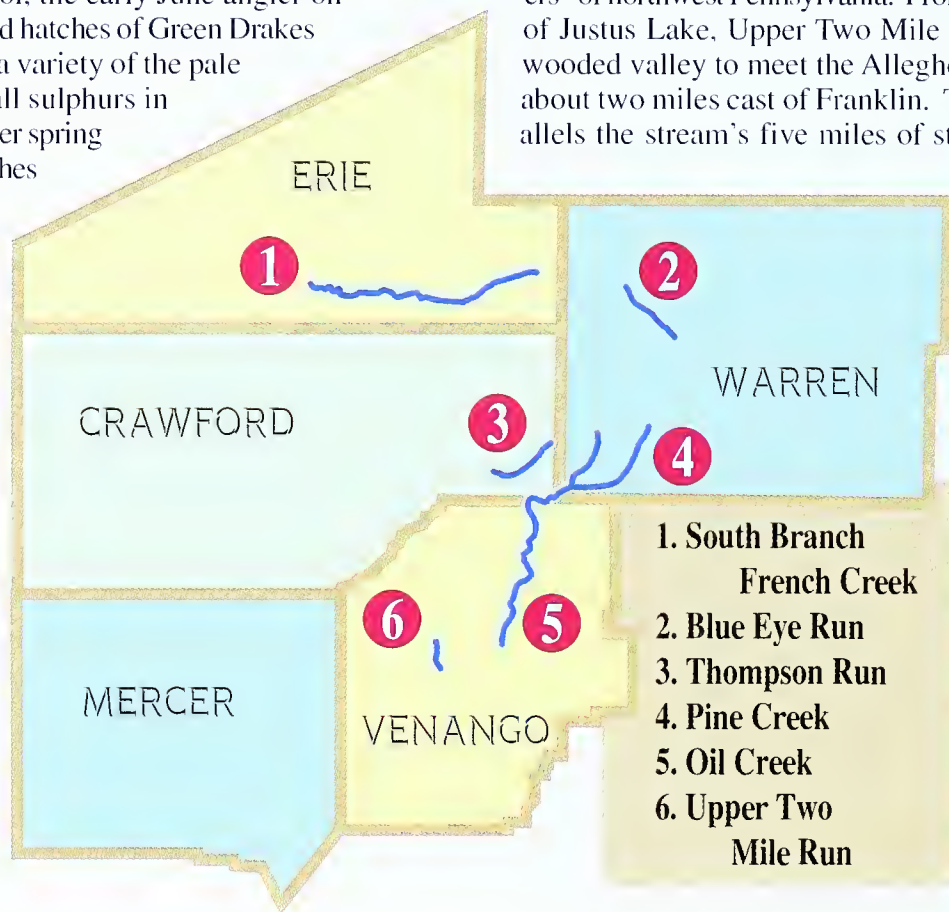
This Venango County stream is one of the true "sleepers" of northwest Pennsylvania. From its source as the outflow of Justus Lake, Upper Two Mile charges down a narrow, wooded valley to meet the Allegheny River along Route 8 about two miles east of Franklin. Two Mile Run Road parallels the stream's five miles of stocked water, and offers numerous pull-offs and parking spots.

Upper Two Mile is a small to moderate-sized stream that features a mix of water types. The lower reaches are characterized by deep pocket water and short pools, as the stream clips rapidly over its rocky bed. Farther upstream are longer, deeper pools with log jams and undercut banks that provide good trout cover. Stocked browns and rainbows are numerous over the entire length of the stream in June.

All angling methods can be productive here in June, but Upper Two Mile is made for the fly fisherman, particularly early in the month. Mike Horrobin, of Conneaut Lake Tackle, closely monitors the hatches on Upper Two Mile. He grew up in Rocky Grove, near the stream, and has been an Upper Two Mile regular for over three decades. Mike advises the early June angler on Upper Two Mile to be prepared for hatches of Green Drakes and Dark Green Drakes. The Dark Green Drake is a huge mayfly, size 8, and is unmistakable. They look like they should have retractable landing gear. Mid-June to late-June anglers on Upper Two Mile find excellent hatches of green and yellow stone flies in sizes 14 to 18, and a variety of tan and olive caddises in similar sizes. A Delta Wing Caddis with a split deerhair wing and a Hare's Ear body is a good fly for searching the water during hatchless periods.

Oil Creek

No discussion of productive northwest Pennsylvania trout water is complete without a look at Oil Creek. This huge, majestic freestoner is at its best in June in its lower reaches, where it flows through the historic scenery of Oil Creek State Park. Good June trout fishing can be found from Drake Well near Titusville



downstream for 13 miles to the Route 8 bridge at Rynd Farm. The upper nine miles of this section are secluded, and have only four road access points—at Drake Well, Miller Farm off Route 227, Pioneer on the west bank of the stream and at Petroleum Center.

Access to the entire section is available to the angler willing to hike or bicycle a paved trail that parallels the stream. This is a good way to get to the more lightly fished sections of Oil Creek.

Oil Creek is big water, and the question of where to fish becomes as important as what to fish. Because of its size, Oil Creek can experience some drastic warming as June becomes more summer-like. These conditions do not stop the fishing, but they do affect where and when you will be most successful on the stream. Look for the resident browns and rainbows where long riffles dump highly oxygenated water into the heads of the Oil Creek pools, and where small tributaries add a shot of cold water to the stream. Fish early and late in the day, when the water is cooler.

Oil Creek is alive with crayfish and hellgrammites, and the bait angler should capitalize on this. Try drifting one of these critters into the heads of pools and through the deeper broken-water sections of the stream. Spinfishermen should be armed not only with the usual array of hardware, but also with an assortment of small crankbaits. These lures can be particularly effective when slightly high and off-color water makes the Oil Creek trout lose some of their customary caution.

Oil Creek is probably the most popular fly fishing destination in northwest Pennsylvania. Early June brings blizzard-like spinner falls of Sulfurs (*Ephemerella Dorothea*) at twilight. A rusty brown spinner in size 18 is a good match. Mike Laskowski of Oil Creek Outfitters at Petroleum Center advises that mid-June mornings bring good hatches of Blue-Wing Olives (*Ephemerella Attenuata*) in sizes 16 and 18. During slack periods, try drifting an all-black Wooly Bugger in sizes 6 or 8 through the deeper pools.

Blue Eye Run

This small tributary to Brokenstraw Creek near Garland in western Warren County is the opposite of Oil Creek in almost every way. Blue Eye averages 12 to 15 feet wide in most sections, and cool water temperatures are maintained all summer long by a dense canopy of sheltering hardwoods. Blue Eye features short, sharp riffles that connect some of the deepest pools I've seen anywhere in Pennsylvania on a stream of this size. Brook and brown trout are stocked before and during the season, and they hold well in the stream. An added bonus in June are the trout that enter Blue Eye to escape the rising water temperatures in Brokenstraw Creek.

Most of Blue Eye flows through State Game Land 143, so there are no access problems a little hiking can't overcome. There are two points of road access to the stream. The lower reaches flow parallel to a narrow dirt road that leaves Route 27 just east of its junction with Route 426 near Garland. This road follows the stream for a few miles before ending at a game lands parking lot. It has a number of places to pull off and park along the way.

Access to the headwaters section is via Eldred Hill Road off Route 426 just east of the village of Spring Creek. The four-mile section between the game lands parking area and Eldred Hill Road is unbridged and worth exploring.

The deep, slow holes of Blue Eye require a cautious approach. Using a tree for cover as you drop your worm or minnow along an undercut bank or log jam can add to your success. Keep out of the trout's sight, and tread lightly along the banks. Spin fishermen should use the same caution, and approach pools from downstream, making as long a cast as possible. Cast beyond your intended target, and retrieve your lure through likely holding water. Try to reach the water that others pass by as impossible, like deeply undercut banks and deadfalls. You may lose a few lures, but you will connect with more trout.

The small, brushy nature of Blue Eye can make for difficult fly casting. However, the low water conditions that often prevail in June can make the long rod the most effective way to fish. Like most small streams of its type, the importance of matching fly hatches on Blue Eye is secondary to presenting the fish with something that looks like food. This makes Blue Eye a good stream to fish with terrestrial imitations. Carefully drop a large deerhair ant or beetle close to in-stream logs and bankside pockets—then hold on.

South Branch French Creek

This medium-sized stream in southern Erie County receives heavy early season pressure, but it is largely deserted after Memorial Day. The stream is stocked with brown trout and rainbow trout before and during the season over a 12-mile section from the Corry city limits down to the mouth three miles west of Union City. Fairly cool water temperatures and heavy stocking maintain a productive fishery well into the summer.

The best of the South Branch's June trout fishing is in the section from Union City down to the mouth. This three-mile stream portion features sections of extensive pocket water mixed with a series of long, deep pools.

Access to this section of the South Branch is very good. Union City maintains a municipal parking area almost on the banks of the stream, and you can park here and explore the portion of the South Branch that bisects the borough. Bridge access below Union City is available on Union-LeBoeuf Road off Route 97 two miles west of Union City, and at the Route 97 bridge on the main stem of French Creek.

Bait fishing on the South Branch in June is best when the water is slightly high and off color. A nightcrawler or softshell crayfish can be productive at these times. Size 1 spinners, white jigs and small crankbaits also work well. Fish these lures through the heads of pools and close to instream obstructions.

There is good fly fishing in this lower section of the South Branch in June. Marshall Young of Union City operates his hardware business no more than 100 yards from the stream, and he can frequently be found on the South Branch. In June, he fishes evening hatches of Light Cahills in size 12, and Sulphurs in sizes 14 to 18. There are also abundant June hatches of various caddises in tan and olive in sizes 14 to 16. Marshall recommends matching them with a soft-hackle wet fly like the Partridge and Green, fished down and across stream.

The onset of summer does not close the book on another northwest Pennsylvania trout season—not by a long shot. Even as the crowds of June converge on area lakes in pursuit of bass and bluegills, there is excellent fishing over stocked trout still to be had in the streams we have highlighted, as well as many others across the region. This year, take a break from the warmwater habit for a day or two, and see for yourself.





THE HIGHLANDS BASS OF YOUGHIOGHENY LAKE

BY JEFF KNAPP

It was easy to visualize crayfish crawling among the many rocks that lined the shoreline shallows. The folks at a nearby tackle shop had told us the smallmouths were hitting crayfish.

Youghiogheny's clear waters made it possible to see deeply into the lake. The day was young and the water was still placid, not having been roiled by the onslaught of boaters that would soon take to the water.

Tom "Tucker" Conway and I were spending a portion of the Labor Day weekend exploring the nooks and crannies of this interesting waterway. Tucker, an Indiana County native, spent much of his childhood on the lake because his family has a cabin there.

The descent of my 1/8-ounce grub was interrupted by the day's first smallmouth bass. It hit the jig with a vengeance, the kind smallies are noted for—the kind where you're glad you had a good grip on the rod. After a short but intense scrap, the fish was in the boat. I was impressed by the bulk of the 14-incher.

Youghiogheny River Lake lies in the heart of the Laurel Highlands, straddling the Pennsylvania-Maryland border. It's one of the most popular aquatic playgrounds in the southwestern part of the state. Among the attractions is a quality bass fishery, one that's been steadily improving during recent years.

The impounded Youghiogheny River flows south to north. About one-quarter of the lake's 16-mile length is in Garrett County, Maryland. The Pennsylvania portion straddles the Fayette-Somerset County line.

"Yough Lake," as it's called locally, covers over 2,800 acres and has depths exceeding 100 feet at summer pool. A Pennsylvania license is valid when fishing Maryland waters from a boat. A Maryland license is necessary to fish from the Yough's shores that are in Maryland. There are no horsepower restrictions, though there are some no-wake zones.

Youghiogheny Lake is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control project, and it is typical of such reservoirs located in mountainous areas. It is long and narrow, with steep, breaking shorelines. Its structure includes many rocky points and rock-lined shorelines. Fish find cover in and around flooded willows, submerged wood, flooded foundations and bridge piers.

According to Clyde Braun, resource manager for the Corps, Youghiogheny will be at summer pool when bass season opens on June 12. A slow drawdown of the lake normally begins in early July. This water release is necessary to help dilute downstream pollution sources—acid mine drainage, and industrial and municipal discharges—and it increases flows in the Monongahela River and upper Ohio River, aiding commercial barge traffic.

Improving fishery

According to Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson, the reason for the improving bass situation at Yough Lake is twofold: Improving water quality and the establishment of a forage base comprised of alewife shad.

The water chemistry is better because sources of mine acid drainage in the headwaters have lessened. It's a beneficial situation that is occurring in many areas of the coal belt, where mine seeps leech free of acid after decades of pollution.

The Fish and Boat Commission can take credit for the fatter gamefish now found in Yough Lake. In 1987, the Commission introduced alewife shad to provide a better food base for what was then skinny fish. The project succeeded. Current growth rates have increased greatly.

Consider data revealed by Area 8 surveys. In 1982, the average size of a four-year-old smallmouth was 11 inches. A four-year-old in 1990 measured 13 inches. Comparing five-year-olds from 1982 and 1990 reveals fish of 13 inches and 15 inches, respectively.

What this means from a practical standpoint is that the lake's post-alewife bass are about a year ahead in their growth than their pre-alewife predecessors.

Like many Corps impoundments, the Yough's bass population is not a particularly dense one. Limited living space, because of the vast amounts of deep water, probably plays a role in this condition. Furthermore, the water moves through them quickly, not having time to build up the nutrient levels needed to create a fertile environment.

The population could best be described as one providing a good shot at better-than-average-sized bass, but not huge numbers of them. Lorson's surveys support this idea because many fish he captured for the 1990 census were over 15 inches. Even though the lake supports both largemouths and smallmouths, legal-sized (12-inch) smallies outnumber their largemouth cousins two to one.

Catching smallmouths

Park Nicklow, of Addison, knows Yough Lake very well. He fished the watershed before its 1943 impoundment. For many years he operated a bait shop in Addison, retiring only recently. He has seen the bass fishing improve recently, and he is well-acquainted with the methods needed to dupe the lake's smallmouth population.

Three main factors determine how Nicklow approaches his smallmouth bass fishing: Time of the year, weather of the year, and lake level. They are somewhat intertwined. Because the Yough's level fluctuates, prime smallmouth spots change. The

lake level drops in early July, but how fast it drops depends on the amount of precipitation. Wet summers, like last year's, slow the process. During drought years, like that of 1991, the lake can drain quickly.

When bass season opens in mid-June, Nicklow begins searching for smallies in the upper part of the lake—in Maryland waters. At times he ventures up into the river itself, near Shellysport, MD. Rocky points are one of the areas he makes contact with smallies. The points Park concentrates on are formed by turns in the main river channel. He relies on his knowledge of the lake to put him on the best spots.

"It's good to learn the lake when the water is down," Nicklow says. "That way you have an idea where the rocks are with the water up. Conditions are constantly changing on this lake."

Flooded willow trees and downed shoreline trees are other productive areas for smallies. The smallmouths leave these spots as summer progresses, but largemouths may use them throughout the season.

Nicklow is a live-bait specialist, and in the early season he relies on minnows and 'crawlers as bait. A simple bait rig consisting of a size 4 hook and a few BB-sized splitshot help present his offerings in a natural manner. He varies the amount of splitshot with the depths he fishes.

As the lake level drops and water temperatures increase, Nicklow works his way down the lake. Other kinds of structure and cover begin to come into play, though prominent rocky points are still top fish-producers. Flooded foundations hold bass as the lake level drops.

This is another case where anglers can benefit from observations made during low water levels. Bridge piers, such as those supporting the Route 40 bridge, are also productive. The best piers tend to be those closest to shore.

The old Route 40 bridge is another popular spot. This piece of structure is totally flooded (under normal pool conditions), and is located just north of the present bridge.

Smallmouths hold in depths of three to 25 feet, depending on how hot the water gets. Last year, with the cool summer, Nicklow caught most of his smallmouths in shallow water. The year before last, the drought year, he had to go as deep as 35 feet to score.

About mid-July, crayfish—soft-shells, in particular—begin to become the premier natural bait. Park fishes the soft-shell on the same rig he uses for minnows and 'crawlers. He casts the bait to shallow water.

For depths over 10 feet, he catches bass by fishing the bait vertically, straight under the boat. He often lifts the crayfish up several inches off the bottom. This reduces snags caused by the bait sneaking under rocks, and it seems to entice the smallmouths more.

Nicklow continues to fish for Youghiogheny smallmouths until the receding water levels eliminate all access areas. This occurs sometime during the fall, and it depends on the season's rainfall.

Nicklow's patterns use live bait, but artificials also produce. I've found 3-inch plastic tails—such as those made by Mr. Twister, Berkley and Renosky Lures—to be effective. The same companies also market small plastic worms that smallmouth bass like. These range in size from 4 to 6 inches. Examples include the Silkworm (Mr. Twister), Power Worm (Berkley) and the Razor Worm (Renosky).



photo: Jeff Knapp

Catching Yough largemouths

Though the Yough's largemouth bass population takes a back seat to the smallmouth fishing, good sport is available. "There's some real giants in there," one local expert says. He catches 3-pounders regularly.

The extreme upper part of the lake has the best largemouth habitat, both the Youghiogheny arm and the Buffalo Run arm. The flooded willows and trees that provide early season smallmouth cover tend to hold the largemouths through much of the year.

In the early season there can be so much area of flooded willows that locating fish can be difficult. The best bigmouth fishing occurs when only a little bit of such habitat is flooded, because this concentrates fish. At times, "islands" of flooded cover are present.

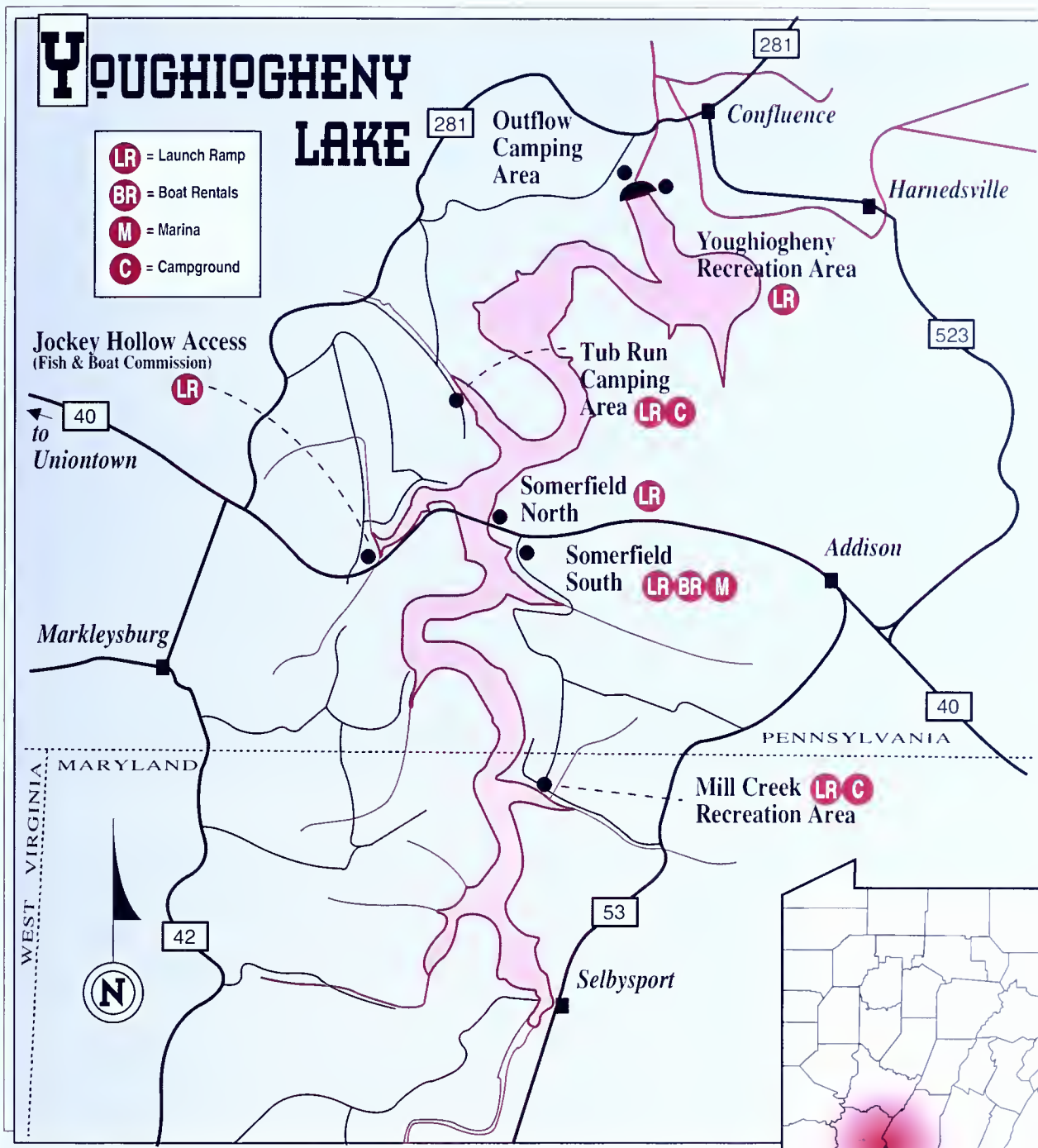
Willows are best fished by flipping or pitching a living rubber bass jig into the cover. These jigs should be tipped with a pork dressing like an Uncle Josh no. 11 pork frog, or one of the many similar dressings now on the market. Black/blue jigs work well in the Yough's relatively clear water. Pork dressings now come in many colors. Black is productive on this lake.

A clear mental picture of the lake's bottom is helpful for fooling largemouths. Some deep, flooded wood cover is present, although knowledge of its location is an advantage in locating such spots. When the water is clear, it's possible to see these sunken trees. Of course, paying attention to a sonar unit also helps in the quest to find the bass.

Lighter jigs—ones in the 1/4-ounce to 3/8-ounce size—should be cast to the edges of such cover, and fished down through it slowly.

Youghiogheny Lake is on the upswing as a bass fishery. The introduction of alewife shad, and improving water quality, are the primary reasons for this surge. Smallmouths are more numerous than largemouths, but specimens of both are present.

Pool levels fluctuate, so knowledge of the lake helps to locate choice bass fishing spots. If the Yough is new to you, why not spend a few trips there this summer checking things out?



Youghiogheny Lake is on the upswing as a bass fishery. The introduction of alewife shad and improving water quality are the primary reasons for this surge. Smallmouths are more numerous than largemouths, but specimens of both are present.

OBTAINING SOFT-SHELLED CRAYFISH

If you make a trip to the Youghiogheny Lake from mid-summer on, you can hear local anglers mention their success on soft-shelled crayfish (they'll probably call them "crabs"). How do you acquire such bait?

My buddy Tucker Conway now spends his time chasing walleyes on the Professional Walleye Trail. But he cut his fishing teeth on the Yough, some of it dragging soft-shells in front of the lake's smallmouths. He got his bait right from the lake.

According to Conway, it's easy to get all the crayfish you need the night before an outing, but remember that the legal limit is 50 per day per person. He and a companion wade shallow, rocky areas at night. The soft-shells, he says, have a purplish appearance. With a flashlight and dip net

it's a simple procedure to gather up bait. Tucker notes that the crayfish are sluggish in the darkness.

Though Park Nicklow is retired, the bait shop that bears his name still sells soft-shells. According to Park, it's a process that involves trapping crayfish, then sorting out the soft-shells and ones just about to shed. Once this is done, they put the crayfish in damp moss and store them in a refrigerator before sale. This delays the process of the critter growing a new (hard) shell. Even so, they last only a week in the soft state.

Nicklow notes that anglers sign up in advance for bait when the bass get on the crayfish. He says supplies are limited, and some requests go unfilled.

"At least we keep *some* of the anglers happy," Nicklow says.—JK.

Penns *After* the Coffin Fly

by Ed Howey

Tailgate parties on the banks of a trout stream? Believe it! In the soft warmth of late May evenings, in the season of the Coffin Fly, folks gather along Penns Creek to eat, drink and fortify the family angler for the impending fury of fishing to these giant spinners. Then, when this world-class mayfly disappears early in June, the crowds vanish. But the fish in Penns Creek do not.

Long honored as a prime trout water, "the Penns" also provides some 15 miles of excellent angling for streambred smallmouth bass, and after the Coffin Fly, in early June, water in the lower reaches has warmed sufficiently to sharpen the appetite of the bass.

The transition from trout water to bass water occurs near Glen Iron. Above Glen Iron the water temperature favors trout, but downstream, smallmouth bass hold sway.

Good roads close to the stream provide access points all along its length, and persistent anglers should have no trouble finding a spot to try for bass. Always excellent water for wade-fishing, stretches of Penns can sometimes be floated in a canoe or eartop boat. Scouting trips to locate launch and take-out spots minimize wasted time on fishing day.

Either spinning or fly tackle gets the job done on Penns smallmouth bass. The relatively shallow water in most stream sections favors light spinning tackle rigged with 6-pound-test line for flipping the small versions of surface or shallow-running lures. Try a Rebel crawfish in the 1/10-ounce size, a Rapala floating minnow in the 1/16-ounce and 1/8-ounce sizes, mid-size Hula Poppers and Zara Spooks. Single-bladed and double-bladed spinners with blades up to size 3, and flashy wobblers of about the same size, work well when fished in bass-holding water.

Live bait anglers turn to minnows, hellgrammites and crayfish, bait species that abound in Penns.

Fly-fishermen find fast smallmouth action with popping bugs and streamers, bulky lures that require heavier tackle than normally used for trout flies. Most anglers get their best results with at least a 7-weight, 8 1/2-foot rod and line combination.

Small baitfish hang out in shallow water where bass often follow in search of a meal, but the smallmouth bass become

wary when they venture into shallow water. Approach these places as cautiously as a heron would and work baitfish-like streamers through the area.

Penns holds a diverse population of aquatic insects, many of which hatch in June, and fly-fishermen alert for signs of bass feeding on the surface often score well. During these hatches, bass on the feed are rarely picky. Exact imitation is not necessary, and a high-riding floater of about the same size and shade as the natural should work well.

Trout action

More careful imitation is required to fool the trout in the waters above Glen Iron. From the source in Penns Cave's limestone springs down to Coburn, Penns Creek provides many fishable stretches with easy access. But at Coburn, Elk and Pine creeks join the main stem to form the Penns that most trout anglers know. The road along the stream dead-ends about a mile below Coburn, and from there access requires a hike.

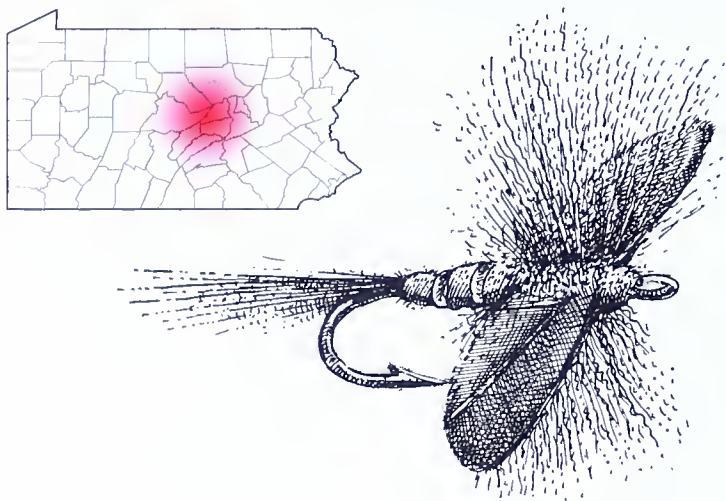
From Coburn down through forested ridges to the Poe Paddy Park area, Penns bears no special regulations. All legal tackle, baits and lures may be used. But from the Swift Run junction downstream to a point about a half-mile below Cherry Run, artificial-lures-only rules apply, and no fish may be killed. Nearly four miles long with no access by vehicle, this stretch offers some of the finest trout fishing in the Commonwealth.

From the no-kill stretch to Glen Iron, Penns Creek is unrestricted in terms of special tackle and lure regulations, but access is more limited. Again, scouting trips to locate access spots save valuable time on fishing day.

Contrary to popular belief, insect activity on Penns does not come to a dead stop after the Coffin Fly. Substantial hatches continue into October, offering excellent chances for persistent anglers.

In early June, the last of the year's Sulphurs appear on many sections of the creek. A tiny mayfly compared to those around since mid-April, *E. dorothea* can be imitated by size 18 artificials with dull-yellow bodies and light-gray wings. Fly shops stock these as Pale Evening Duns, Pale Watery Duns and of course, just plain Sulphurs. Be sure your Sulphurs are no larger than size 18. The spinner phase of the insect is quite similar to the dun except that it carries a bright-orange egg sac. If you can't find these in your favorite fly shop, use an orange marker pen to dab color onto the last 64th-inch of the dun body. On overcast days, *dorothea* may hatch in early afternoon, but most activity occurs at dusk when both the spinner and dun may be together on the water.

Though most insect activity at this time of year takes place after sundown, early bird anglers should look for morning activity about the middle of June, when hatches of the Morning Blue-Wing Olive (*E. cornuta*) bring trout to the surface between the hours of 8 and 10 a.m. Standard Blue-Wing Olive dry flies in size 14 are effective during this hatch.





Impressive hatch

In late June and early July, one of the most impressive hatches of the year appears. Yet another mayfly species tagged with the Blue-Winged Olive label, *E. attenuata*, at size 18, is two sizes smaller than its morning cousin, but makes up for lack of size with vast numbers. Emergence times may vary, sometimes beginning as early as 3 p.m. but normally later in the evening, often mixing with the spinner fall.

Because hatching takes place beneath the surface, the dun takes off after a very short float, and the trout soon learn to take their shot *before* the hatching insect reaches the top. Small emerger patterns as well as wet flies often work best during this hatch.

The astounding abundance of *E. attenuata* becomes evident when the spinners fall. Too tiny to see on the surface in the gathering darkness, the presence of the spinners is revealed by the onset of furious feeding activity. A small dip net held in

the current for a few seconds comes out elugged with tiny spent-wing insects. A simple size 18 poly-wing spinner matches the natural quite well, but it is far from a guarantee of success during this frenzied activity. I know a very skilled angler who never tries to copy the naturals, going instead with a small streamer twitched just beneath the surface, a tactic that has produced some very nice fish during the *attenuata* spinner fall.

In early July the first of the *Isonychia* hatches appears. Commonly called Slate Drakes, various species of this large (size 12), dark mayfly continue to appear until early October. Observant anglers will notice discarded nymphal shucks clinging to streamside rocks where *Isonychia* prefers to shed the nymph ease, instead of doing so on the stream. The process offers little for dry fly addicts, but the spinner, dubbed the White-Gloved Howdy by one-time *Angler* editor Charles Wetzel, soon provides surface action for floater fishermen. Dry-fly fans get another chance with the late-season (late September, early October) *Isonychia*, which hatches on the surface more frequently than its summer cousins.

From the hot days of July to brilliant October afternoons, terrestrials sporadically give rise to excellent fishing along the entire length of Penns Creek trout water. The best bets are hopper patterns in sizes 8 and 10, and a variety of ant patterns ranging from size 14 to 20, in both black and cinnamon shades. Use the hoppers to prospect on good-looking holding water, especially where fields border the stream. Fish the ants close to shore where trees and brush overhang the current.

Though only one stretch of Penns is restricted to catch and release, application of the practice over the entire length of this priceless stream can go a long way toward ensuring the preservation of fishing pleasure for those who will follow. The long season after the Coffin Fly can only get better if we put them back in the beginning.





21 Tips

for *Catching Big Pennsylvania Largemouths*

by Darl Black

Big bass—everyone wants to catch one. And after you tangle with one, you want to do it again and again. First, let's establish what a "big bass" is. The determining size, of course, is relative to our geographic region. The state record of 11 pounds, 3 ounces is an exception, far from typical bass growth in Pennsylvania. Any largemouth over 8 pounds is very special, too. Only 10 largemouths exceeding 8 pounds were reported to the Fish and Boat Commission's awards program in 1991.

A 3-pound bass is a respectable fish, but not really a big bass by most angling standards. Perhaps the best benchmark for defining a big bass is the minimum qualifying weights set for the Commission's Angler Recognition Program. In the junior division that's 4 pounds and in the senior division, 5 pounds.

For a bass in Pennsylvania to reach the 4-pound mark means it has survived at least eight years. An eight-year-old bass has gained much life experience, providing ample opportunity to fine-tune its instinctive behavior. An older, mature fish is less likely to make the mistakes that result in our catching younger bass.

Also consider population structure. The number of bass over 4 pounds in a given waterway is a small percentage of the total bass population. Now you begin to understand why big bass are difficult to catch.

Every angler who lands a big bass has a special responsibility to the resource and to other fishermen. Do not harvest big bass simply to show them off or enter them in contests. Handle big bass carefully and return each to the water alive to grow into a true trophy bass—perhaps a new state record.

To share a memory or establish bragging rights, carry a camera and snap a photo—and send it to the *Angler* for publication consideration in the "Currents" section. Remember, big bass are few in number—share the thrill you enjoyed by putting the fish back for another angler to catch.

Anglers desiring to catch big bass consistently need to harness all their skill and knowledge. The following tips can give you an edge. Not every tip applies to all situations, but the focus is on Pennsylvania fishing.

1. Learn to use a baitcasting outfit. Ability with a baitcaster, or free-spool casting reel, offers advantages over spinning tackle when it comes to big-bass fishing. These advantages include increased casting accuracy, ability to handle heavier lines and larger lures, stout-action rods, and reel winching power. In certain circumstances spinning equipment may be useful in a search for big bass, but baitcasting fits your needs more often.

2. Learn to flip and pitch. Flipping and pitching are short-

Fish quietly. Big bass did not get big by being dumb. They shy away from noises they do not associate with forage.



Handling Big Bass

Special care must be taken to ensure that a released bass survives. These precautions are even more important when dealing with big bass.

- Never swing a bass over the gunwale and drop it on the boat deck. Never handle a bass more than is absolutely necessary to unhook it. Be sure your hands are wet before touching it.

- If you're using a net, select either a rubber mesh or a knotless fine-mesh material. Other nets can injure a fish.

- The lip-lock grip (thumb and first finger pinching the lower jaw) is an acceptable hold for bass. However, do not force the mouth open by bending the lower jaw downward. This can result in damage to the jaw.

For photos, hold the bass completely vertical with a lip-lock grip, or horizontal with two hands supporting the head and belly of the fish.—DB.



line presentations designed for precise, quiet entry around shallow, heavy cover situations. These lure presentation techniques were designed for big-bass territory. Master them.

3. Use quality abrasion-resistant line. Big bass hang out in wicked wood and weed. A fishing line must stand up to rubbing against cover. Depending on lure presentation, use line between 12-pound and 20-pound test. Keep fresh line on your reel; change line frequently—at least every month.

4. Use only sharp hooks. The two main reasons for losing fish are bad line and dull hooks. After tip 3, you should have taken care of your line. Now sharpen your hooks. Sluff it off and you'll lose the big one—many big ones.

5. Fish shallow water. For any given waterway in Pennsylvania, largemouth bass can be found shallower than other gamefish. My records show roughly 60 percent of the big largemouths I've caught come from water less than 10 feet deep. By dropping down to 20 feet, another 30 percent of the big bass I've caught are included. That leaves 10 percent for those always-present exceptions. Actual depth is relative to water clarity, available cover, forage and season.

6. Fish near deep water. "Fish shallow" instructions indicate where largemouths in a feeding mode can most likely be found. However, on many waters, particularly on manmade reservoirs with minimum shallow cover, big bass tend to hold in deeper water when inactive and migrate to shallower water to feed. Catching these negative-attitude big bass in deep water is nearly impossible, but be sure to position yourself in the shallows near deep water to obtain the best advantage when the fish move shallow to feed.

7. Fish wood. Scuba divers' reports, as well as fishing experience, clearly show that big largemouth bass have an affinity for congregating near objects that rise off the bottom. Wood, in one form or another, can be found rising above the bottom in almost every lake—stumps, logs, standing timber, brush piles, and even dock posts. Wood cover is particularly important in the early spring and late fall when green vegetation is not available.

8. Fish weeds. Beds of green, growing aquatic vegetation are a smorgasbord for bass. Weed beds serve as host to insects, crustaceans, small minnows, panfish and larger predators—all interlocking relationships in the food chain. Because vegetation can provide cover and a ready source of food through much

of the summer, on some lakes big bass spend the summer within the confines of a weedbed. Never pass up weeds.

9. Fish “big bass” lures. Don’t misunderstand—big bass can be caught on just about any lure. However, over the years, certain lures have developed solid reputations as consistent big-bass producers because of size, sound, action, appearance, ability to penetrate cover, or a combination of these factors. A jig-and-pig and a 6-inch to 8-inch plastic worm are two baits that always top the list of big bass lures. Running close behind is a weedless spoon because of this lure’s ability to be fished where big bass often hide.

Two specific surface lures are usually found on the list because of their unique sound and action—a splash bait (Zara Spook) for daytime fishing, and a gurgle bait (Jitterbug) for nighttime. One of the newest lures headed for the list is the six-inch soft stick bait (Slug-Go). At certain times of the year, big-lipped crankbaits and lipless rattle baits may make the list, too.

10. Fish efficiently. Simply put, this means use the best lure for the job. Don’t cast a lure with exposed hooks into a mat of vegetation and then complain about hanging weeds. Instead, wake the surface with a weedless spoon or drop a Texas-rigged worm into an open pocket. Don’t throw a shallow-running plug over open water if you’re searching for deep stumps when a big-lipped bottom-bumping crankbait is required.

11. Fish quickly to explore; fish slowly to catch. Experienced anglers know that a major factor in catching big bass is finding the exact spot to work. A moderately slow presentation is generally most effective for big bass. However, to locate that honey spot, an angler must cover water quickly. Certain lures (such as crankbaits) are fished quickly to learn which sites have the “right stuff”—stump, dropoff, brush, weed clump, etc. Later, a repeat pass is made with a slower presentation—such as a worm or jig—which is more likely to entice a big bass.

12. Know which live bait to use. I do not recommend live bait for bass because artificials are more efficient for heavy cover presentations, and live bait fished in bass habitat is not selective in the species it attracts. However, under certain situations, you may want to use live bait.

Forget about store-bought live bait raised in a hatchery. Live bait used should be caught locally. The number one live bait for big largemouths is a 4-inch to 6-inch native golden shiner. It is far superior to any other minnow-type forage. For live-bait fishing at night, crayfish are tops. No, they do not need to be soft shells!

13. Let weather work in your favor. Weather affects fish activity and location. Good anglers can make the necessary adjustments to catch some bass in changing weather, but few big largemouths are taken during these times. Skip the blue sky days following a cold front. Focus instead on stable weather periods, preferably with haze or cloudy overcast. Drizzle or light rain accompanying a warm front is dynamite, too.

14. Concentrate on March/April and October. In my experience, water temperature from about 42 to 50 degrees in the spring is an exceptional big-bass bite. Also, in October, with water temperatures falling from the 60s into the high 40s, there is another feeding binge as big bass prepare for a long winter.

15. Fish at night during the summer. One radio-tagging study showed that the largest bass in some lakes feed only under cover of darkness. Night fishing is especially important for lakes with very clear water or marginal shallow cover. Also, recreational activities on popular resort lakes often make daylight fishing

dangerous as well as unproductive. Try the night shift for big success.

16. Fish extremes during the “dog days” of summer. Here is an alternative to night fishing. During the hottest days of late summer, active big bass are taken during daylight hours either from under surface weed mats in very shallow water commonly referred to as “the slop,” or from offshore structures—primarily mid-lake humps cresting at 10 to 15 feet below the surface. One or the other of these extremes (or both) may produce on your lake.

17. Fish hard-to-reach waters. If fancy fishing boats cannot be launched because there’s no ramp, chances are pretty good the lake does not receive a lot of fishing pressure. The more out-of-the-way the water, the more likely the big bass population is untouched. Weedy lakes and ponds, such as those found on game lands, often provide excellent big bass fishing. Buy a canoe, float tube, chest waders, or whatever—just get after them!

18. Fish during the week. If you must limit your fishing to popular waters with lots of weekend boaters and anglers, switch to fishing on weekdays when lake activity is at a minimum. Big bass don’t respond to commotion caused by powerboats buzzing overhead or water-loving frolickers romping about.

19. Select fertile lakes with a strong forage base. Pennsylvania has a variety of lakes, but not all are suited to growing big bass. Clear water, steep-sided, bare-bottom reservoirs are inhospitable to largemouths. So are reservoirs with rapid level fluctuations that occur in the spring and early summer.

A good bass water is nutrient-rich, but not nutrient-overloaded. Studies have shown the ideal balance for optimum largemouth populations is about 20 percent to 25 percent of the lake in aquatic vegetation. When the lake reaches 50 percent weed congestion, not only are angling efforts hampered, but the weed growth jeopardizes the bass population by sheltering too many panfish and increasing the number of rough fish.

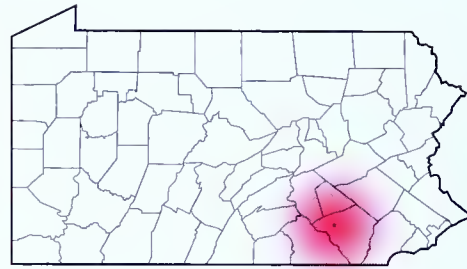
The best bass lakes have a reliable baitfish population, not subject to cyclic fluctuations. Native minnow and shiners, supplemented by young-of-the-year panfish, offer the best forage base for largemouth. If the native forage base is adequate, the introduction of gizzard shad or similar baitfish may do more harm than good.

20. Fish quietly. Big bass did not get big by being dumb. They shy away from noises they do not associate with forage. Running the outboard right up to a spot, banging around the boat, bumping into cover, or splashing anchors causes big bass to move out of the area temporarily.

Also consider how you operate an electric motor. Many expert anglers believe running the motor intermittently at high speeds (turning it on and off) spooks bass in shallow water. They recommend running an electric positioning motor at a constant low speed.

21. Blend into the surroundings. Here is one tip you would never figure out by looking at angler-with-fish pictures in magazines because editors like to see bright colors in photos. Some of the best big-bass anglers I know insist on fishing in dark-colored or camouflage clothing. They believe shallow-water bass, particularly big ones, detect movement of bright color above the surface and realize that these aren’t natural. I know several anglers who have painted the bottom of their boats gray or light blue to blend with the sky.

An Hour from Lancaster



by
Ed Howey

The Commission's 1993 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* list of approved trout waters in Lancaster County occupies 11 lines, one of the fattest listings in the book. Add to this several quality streams in adjacent counties, a half-dozen well-managed lakes and some 50 miles of the lower Susquehanna River and you get a clear picture of angling opportunities an hour from Lancaster.

Trout waters

Notable among the many Lancaster County streams that receive abundant pre-season and in-season stockings are Middle Creek, Conowingo Creek and West Branch Octoraro Creek, all good-sized waters in times of normal rainfall.

The Middle Creek fishery begins at the outflow of the Middle Creek Waterfowl Management Lake and runs south for several miles. Local road crossings provide access. Conowingo Creek originates southwest of Quarryville and flows nearly due south for about 10 miles. Local roads off routes 272 and 222 provide access. The West Branch Octoraro Creek produces excellent early season fishing. From Mectinghouse Creek, a tiny tributary that rises near the junction of routes 896 and 372, the West Branch flows through farms and woodlands to Octoraro Lake. A dozen local roads across the stream provide access to about 10 miles of fishable water.

The major stillwater trout resource, Muddy Run Reservoir, is heavily stocked with trout early in the season and again in the fall. With normal rainfall and moderate temperatures during the winter, some of these fall stockers survive to the following spring to provide welcome surprises for early season anglers. Though fishable from shore, Muddy Run Reservoir is best fished from a small boat. Rules permit only electric motors.

Several trout streams good enough to warrant special regulations lie within range.

Just south of Quarryville, the Route 472 bridge crosses the West Branch Octoraro near the head of a 1.9-mile stretch subject to delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only regulations. The pools and riffles down the wooded gorge and in the meadow stretch below are a real test for the dedicated fly angler.

The second in-county stream on the list is Donegal Creek, in the northwest region near Marietta. Donegal is a small spring creek that maintains cool water year-round. The delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only stretch starts at the markers below the Route 772 bridge and runs downstream for 2.4 miles to the markers at county road T-334. The stream receives a good deal of TLC

from the Donegal Fish & Conservation Association and the Donegal Chapter of Trout Unlimited. It's an example of how local participation can help ensure good fishing.

Outside the borders of Lancaster County, but still within an hour of the city, trout anglers have access to three streams that provide consistent action.

Across the Susquehanna is York County, where Muddy Creek averages better than 40 feet in width, and some eight miles of the main stem below Muddy Creek Forks receive regular stockings as do feeder streams Toms Run and Bald Eagle Creek. The latter name may seem fanciful for this part of the world, but not so. Much of the area remains in rugged woodland, and in the vicinity of Muddy Creek's confluence with the Susquehanna, annual sightings of nesting eagles draw hundreds of springtime visitors. Two miles of Muddy Creek between Bruce and Bridgeton are subject to fly-fishing-only regulations.

Looking to the north, Quittapahilla Creek in Lebanon County offers fine prospects. This stream owes life to its limestone origins, and to cessation of operations at a major industrial plant in Lebanon. After an absence of 20 years, regular stocking was resumed on the stream in 1985, and since then the stocked area has been expanded. In 1992, 1.1 miles of stream from the T-398 bridge downstream to S.R. 934 were designated delayed harvest, artificial lures only. Centered on Quittie Park in Annville, the regulated section is accessible from the park and several local roads. West of Annville, Syner Road follows several miles of fishable water with access at a number of points where bridges cross. With continued help from those who fish it, the Quittapahilla could become a shining example of trout stream resilience.

Another trout stream rebirth brought about by cooperation among local sportsmen and the Fish and Boat Commission is Tulpehocken Creek, below Blue Marsh Dam, with nearly four miles of water governed by delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only regulations. These restrictions, plus a stocking program that releases vast numbers of fingerlings in the fall, have produced an excellent trout fishery. If you want to join some very skilled fishermen working on some very picky trout, visit the Tulpehocken during the long mid-summer *Trico* hatch. The best access to this waterway is from Route 183 via several local roads.

An hour trip from Lancaster also turns up many opportunities for the non-trout angler. Clearly, the lower Susquehanna lies within reach. And for those who find the big river intimidating, a half-dozen medium-size lakes offer a variety of gamefish and panfish.

Notable among the many Lancaster County streams that receive abundant pre-season and in-season stockings are Middle Creek, Conowingo Creek and West Branch Octoraro Creek.



Lancaster County

Middle Creek Lake. At the heart of the Middle Creek Waterfowl Management Area, this impoundment nestles in marshy country within the borders of State Game Lands 46. Top-water action for largemouth bass is a big attraction. An ample panfish population also provides pleasant fishing on quiet waters where you'll never hear the sound of power because none is permitted. Located north of the Turnpike, about 10 miles northwest of Ephrata, local roads lead to the shoreline.

Speedwell Forge Lake. A few miles southwest of Middle Creek Lake, Speedwell Forge lies to the west of Route 501 north of Lititz. Fish and Boat Commission signs mark the way from the highway to the lake, where largemouth bass are the primary quarry, with muskies and northern pike also available. Only electric power is permitted.

Muddy Run Reservoir. Mentioned previously as an early season trout bonanza, this water also serves up largemouth bass and a variety of panfish year-round. Follow Route 372 west from Quarryville to signs directing visitors to Philadelphia Electric's Muddy Run Recreation Area, which includes excellent small-boat launch facilities. Once again, electric power only is allowed.

Octoraro Reservoir. Located in the southeastern portion of Lancaster County, this popular waterway features largemouth and smallmouth bass, with frequent catches of walleyes, northerns and panfish reported by regulars. Follow Route 472 south from Quarryville or north from Oxford to signs to the launch area and boat livery.

York County

Lakes Williams and Redman. Both of these fine bass lakes lie south of York along I-83. Both are restricted to electric power and are subject to Conservation Lake regulations. Check page 30 of your summary for details.

Susquehanna waters

From the top of the Conowingo Pool to the rocky shores of Three Mile Island, the Susquehanna River provides an angler's smorgasbord—stripers, striper hybrids, smallmouth and largemouth bass, walleyes, muskies, channel catfish and a variety of panfish. From numerous launch facilities along this stretch, small boats equipped with 10hp or more can cover most of the water. Shorebound or wading anglers can also find access to productive water.

Upstream from the old Route 30 bridge lie two miles of rock-ribbed rapids that can be conveniently waded when the river stage at Harrisburg is 3.5 feet or lower. And just below the Norman Wood Bridge on Route 372, Philadelphia Electric maintains Fisherman's Park from which shorebound anglers can fish the tailrace water spilling out of the storage dam. For detailed information, check with sport shops and boat liveries near the access facilities.

Though we're not dealing with remote wilderness here, good maps can be a big help for anglers unfamiliar with the territory. Type 3 County General Highway maps do a good job. Contact: PennDOT Publications Store, P.O. Box 2028, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2028; phone: (717) 787-6747. A few hours spent plotting the course add precious minutes to your fishing time when you get there.



A Guide to State-Line Smallies

by Tom Feaelu

For many years the Delaware River was dubbed “the most underfished river in the East.” But head onto the state-line waterway today and it’s obvious the title no longer applies. Even though the shad run, which peaks in April and May, quintuples the number of anglers on the Penn-Jersey waterway, the other selection of fish ranging from muskies to crappies and striped bass to catfish keeps river anglers busy throughout the four seasons.

But the year-round king is the smallmouth bass, the fish that—other than George Washington’s Christmas eve cruise to Trenton and the spring run of oceanic shad—made the Delaware famous.

Smallmouth have no closed season here and anglers may cast to them whenever they wish. River anglers have their own familiar “secret holes,” of course, and anyone with access to a privately owned shoreline may enjoy casting without ever tangling lines with other fishermen.

The exception is the float-tripper who may legally fish anywhere on the Delaware. Floating in a canoe, john boat or rubber raft is a favored method of reaching the otherwise inaccessible holes. However, sufficient access is provided on public lands and launch areas to open the river for anyone wanting to cast for smallmouth.

J.B. Kasper of Morrisville has spent as many hours catching Delaware smallmouth as anyone. He’s a commercial guide, writer and lecturer and often steals a busman’s holiday just to cast for fun. Few anglers know the Delaware better.

Even though boats and canoes may provide the best angling opportunities, shore fishing and wading are standard procedures in many parts of the river.

“I grew up on the river and I first tell anyone who wants to fish it that there are really two Delawares,” Kasper explains. “Below Trenton is the tidewater and you won’t find many smallmouth bass there—some largemouths, though.

“North of Trenton the Delaware’s personality changes abruptly, providing not only smallmouth habitat but home for muskies, walleye, channel catfish, panfish, the occasional trout, and in spring, spawning shad, herring and striped bass.

“There’s really no spot from Trenton all the way north to New York that doesn’t have smallmouth bass,” says Kasper. “It’s just that some areas are easier to reach than others.”

Kasper’s recommendation for the best smallmouth fishing in the river’s 200 or so miles of freshwater is the lower Delaware—specifically the 30-mile stretch of lower Monroe County and much of Northampton County, from the Delaware Water Gap south to the Delaware’s confluence with the Lehigh River in Easton.

Access and launch sites are available only in scattered locations, but they exist in sufficient numbers to let even newcomers find a suitable site to wade or float a boat. Float-fishing, of course, opens the entire stretch, but not without some obstacles of which anglers must be aware.

As it flows through the picturesque Water Gap east of Stroudsburg, the Delaware changes from a shallow, gravel-bottomed, stream-like flow to a deeper, fast-moving river with potentially dangerous elements. The same rocks and boulders that can damage or tip a boat, subsurface and exposed, hold excellent smallmouth numbers.

Floaters encounter several sectors with Class IV and Class V rapids, requiring portaging or careful navigation by experienced canoeists. One such area is about three miles south of the Portland access, and another is at Foul Rift, a notorious stretch of white water immediately north of the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company’s generating station near Martins Creek. Many anglers consider Foul Rift the most hazardous rapids on the entire river.

Fishing anywhere on the fringes of such rapids can be quite productive, and sprinkled with some common-sense caution, isn’t particularly dangerous. Wading near shore or dunking live bait from the shoreline is recommended with many pockets and small eddies to be found within casting distance. These pockets and eddies are on the fringe of the fast water, among the many rocks where smallmouth lurk. They provide the fish with non-stop deliveries of invertebrates, minnows, fingerlings and insects.

Launch sites and river access for this bass-rich sector can be found at Easton, Sandt’s Eddy, Martins Creek power station, Belvidere (N.J.), the Metropolitan Edison Power Plant near Portland and the Kittatinny access behind the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Visitor Center, just off I-80. Most of the access areas lead to waters safe for larger boats or flat-bottomed prams. Many other accesses for wading and shore fishing can be found off Route 611, which parallels the river much of the way from Easton to the gap.

Even though boats and canoes may provide the best angling opportunities, shore fishing and wading are standard procedures in many parts of the river.

According to Kasper, chances of catching numerous smallmouth bass are as good or better than ever throughout the river but notably so in its southern half. Clean, dam-free waters are the result of environmental protection and pollution enforcement in recent years, particularly in the Delaware’s tidal area,



You're not going to catch smallmouth bass as big as you find in some of our lakes, but you can catch a lot of them if you use the right gear.



allowing passage of shad, stripers, herring and baitfish normally associated with saltwater. Furthermore, the controversial Tocks Island Dam project in the water gap is now congressionally dead, guaranteeing that the Delaware remains free-flowing into the 21st century.

I can vouch for the smallmouth's resurgence in at least one part of the Delaware. When I was a kid a local old-timer, a grandfather substitute of sorts, took me with him every week or two, spring through fall, to bank-fish the Delaware in several areas of Bucks County. Our standard prey was catfish, carp, suckers and panfish, but every so often a smallmouth would take hold, dealing up a surprise for both of us.

Today, nearly 40 years later, no one's surprised at pulling in a smallmouth, even when drifting darts for shad in spring. Even though this isn't trophy bass territory, the river makes up for lunkers with plenty of action.

Kasper's thousands of smallmouth catches and those made by the dozens of anglers he guides on the southern Delaware each year average 8 to 14 inches. Some 50 hook-ups a day aren't unusual, Kasper says, and on some days he and other anglers have tied into well over 200 scrappy bronzebacks—not bad no matter how one measures success.

Unlike other Pennsylvania waters that have a closed season during the spring spawning period, bass season is open year-round on the Delaware. A daily limit of five bass (largemouth and/or smallmouth) each 12 inches or longer is permitted.

The non-tidal section of the lower river also yields occasional largemouths, particularly on the debris-covered areas of shoreline and the rims of islands where the current is slow. Quiet eddies also hold largemouth bass, although few anglers fish specifically for them north of Trenton.

The right stuff

When it comes to terminal tackle, Kasper says, "Think small!

"You're not going to catch smallmouth in the Delaware as big as you'll find in some of our lakes, but you can catch a lot of them if you use the right gear."

Delaware smallies feast mainly on crayfish, leeches, dace, small minnows, and in summer, shad fingerlings and insects. Kasper says as much as 75 percent of a smallmouth's summer forage is under two inches long, and surprisingly, much of it consists of insect life.

"They're like trout at that time," he says. "Why should they hunt other food when all they have to do is open their mouths and sip insects?"

Summer anglers know that when they lift a Delaware small-

mouth to remove the hook, the fish will often regurgitate insects. Even though fly fishermen cast streamers and other flies, insect patterns aren't necessary for taking bass in the warm months. Small lures are understandably the most enticing to feeding fish, including poppers tossed into eddies and backwashes where smallmouth lurk.

Kasper recommends mid-July through mid-September as prime top-water time. It's also the most pleasant period for donning shorts and sneakers and wading to the rock-strewn edges of riffles, eddies and tributaries—or making a long-distance float trip.

Kasper uses a variety of baits, including small floating plugs such as Rapalas and Rebels; shallow-running crankbaits including the Rebel Crawfish, Bomber Model A and Bagley's Balsa B; Mepps Aglia, Panther Martin, Roostertail and Vibrax spinners; tiny wobbling spoons and similarly small spinnerbaits.

The most widely used and arguably the most effective artificials are small jigs tipped with plastic tails. The combination of flowing water and rocky structure enables better lure control and the ability to cover more submerged nooks and crannies with the quick-sinking jigs, whether you cast from a craft or you wade.

Light lines and light to light-medium tackle are needed to work the lead-headed lures accurately. Four to 6-pound-test line on light-action spinning gear is the river standard.

Kasper recommends stiffer-action rods when fishing live

baits, providing better hook-setting power. Crayfish, killifish (used by saltwater anglers for flounder), small shiners and fathead minnows, nightcrawlers, redworms and crickets are all producers of river smallmouth bass.

"Most anglers make the mistake of fishing for (Delaware) smallmouth bass with the same lures they use for largemouth bass," Kasper says, "but those lures are too big."

However, some big smallmouth are taken from the state-line river each year. Kasper's personal catch-and-release record—a 6-pound, 1-ounce smallie—was taken in Bucks County waters near Lambertville. He's also guided two anglers to a pair of smallmouth bass exceeding 6 pounds during the past few seasons.

Those catches are rare, but they show that big smallies do exist.

Adding to the Delaware's attraction, Kasper points to biologists' findings that indicate excellent smallmouth spawning success during the springs of 1989 through 1991. That should translate to a boost in bass numbers this year and in the seasons to come.



Float-tripping the Delaware

The float trip, whether only a mile or two or an overnight excursion, is the best and in some cases the only way to get to the smallmouth hangouts that don't get pressured.

Float-tripping the Delaware is best done in a canoe with experienced paddlers. Some anglers use rubber rafts, arguably the safest crafts to negotiate rapids. But be sure the inflatable can take the certain snags and scrapes encountered in the rocky stretches. Don't rely on a "bargain-priced" mail-order raft here.

In some stretches a john boat will do, provided the occupants are willing to drag it through or around rapids—no great problem except during cold weather. And with smaller boats it's much easier to launch and pull out, considering that not all access sites are modernized.

The use of a small horsepower outboard is recommended on floats of more than three or four miles. Floaters often encounter large pools or long, flowing stretches—areas you may not want to fish. The motor helps you meet your destination deadline without fear of darkness setting in while you're still far upriver.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey have reciprocal agreements permitting shore fishing from either bank of the Delaware. However, Pennsylvania's law is not "official," even though licensed New Jersey anglers are welcome on the Keystone State side of the water.

Pennsylvania and New York have a reciprocal agreement permitting fishing from both shores by licensed anglers from either state. See page 6 of the 1993 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*.

Considering a summer float trip during spring and summer's prime time? Here are several floats through smallmouth country, portions of which are also fishable via public access areas.

Bucks County—

Lumberville Wing Dam to Lambertville

Launching from Bull's Island on the Garden State side of the Delaware puts you afloat below the Lumberville wing dam, which poses danger to all crafts passing through the narrow, fast-flowing gap. Pull-out is at the Lambertville Access, immediately south of the Lambertville-New Hope Bridge.

This is a pleasant six-mile stretch with moderate riffles and long, slow-moving pools. The water is relatively shallow throughout, dipping to 12-foot depths occasionally.

Upper Black Eddy to Frenchtown

Just over five miles, this float stretch offers plenty of opportunity for wading and bouncing jigs or floating a live minnow. This stretch is characterized by gentle riffles, below which are offered good "tailwater" fishing and long pools. Depths vary from 2 to 10 feet.

Launch at Upper Black Eddy, a Fish & Boat Commission access, and pull out at the Tinicum Access.

Northampton County—

Martins Creek Power Plant to Sandt's Eddy

Anglers will find a variety of structure and habitat in this five-mile stretch with fast-flowing pools, mild riffles, numerous rocks, dropoffs and varied shoreline structure along the way.

Launch at the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company's fa-

cility and pull out at the Fish & Boat Commission's modern access at Martins Creek.

Monroe County—

Smithfield Beach to Delaware Water Gap

Take your camera on this float—it leads through some of the most scenic areas cut by the river. Lands on both sides are under the management of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

This is an easy float of about four miles with plenty of spots to wade or roam the shoreline of several islands and cast.

Launch at the recreation area's Smithfield Beach access on River Road north of Shawnee Inn and pick up about six miles south at the Kittatinny Access on the New Jersey side, just south of the I-80 toll bridge.

Pike/Monroe counties—Bushkill to Smithfield Beach

You cross one of the deepest sectors of the Delaware in this float from the Bushkill ramp adjacent to Route 209 south to Smithfield Beach. There's plenty of slow-moving current and a mix of fast-flowing waters with some Class V spots that require portaging around, or for accomplished canoeists, running the rapids.

Plan a dawn-to-dusk float of more than nine miles, allowing sufficient time for concentrating on pools below rapids.

Pike County—Dingmans Ferry to Bushkill

Also within the federal recreation area, this pleasant stretch provides lots of flat water for surface fishing during the warm months. There are long pools punctuated by riffles and fast-flowing rapids.

Put in at the access at the Dingmans Ferry Bridge and take out at Bushkill for about a nine-mile float.

Wayne/Pike counties—Matamoras to Milford

Nine miles of river here feature short pools and numerous riffles with some sharp drops, creating swift rapids along the rocky east shoreline—excellent for tossing jigs and small crankbaits.

Launch at the Matamoras access and exit at Bob's Beach north of the Milford Bridge or south of the bridge at New Jersey's Milford fee access.

Wayne County—Narrowsburg to Lackawaxen

This 17-mile stretch isn't for the casual angler looking for a morning's float. Plan two days with an overnight camp and expect plenty of rapids and shallows all along the way—along with some spectacular scenery and good fishing.

Launch on the New York side at the Department of Conservation ramp and exit at the Fish & Boat Commission's Zane Grey Access where the Lackawaxen River flows into the Delaware.

Delaware River Maps

The Delaware River Basin Commission (c/o Recreation Maps, P.O. Box 7360, West Trenton, NJ 08628) offers a helpful set of six maps covering the entire river. The maps were updated in 1991, and the set sells for \$10 postpaid —TF.

Cast and Caught



Jersey Shore resident Jeffery Bain fooled this black crappie with a shiner. The fish, taken from Colyer Lake, weighed 1.75 pounds and was 15 inches long.



Daniel Pritts, of Mount Joy, earned a Junior Angler's Award with this nice carp. The fish, caught out of Little Chickies Creek, Lancaster County, weighed 13 pounds and was 27 inches long. Nice job, Daniel!



Germansville resident Frederick Peters, Jr., earned a Senior Angler Award for this nice yellow perch. The Lake Wallenpanpack fish weighed 1 pound, 8 ounces and was 13 1/2 inches long.



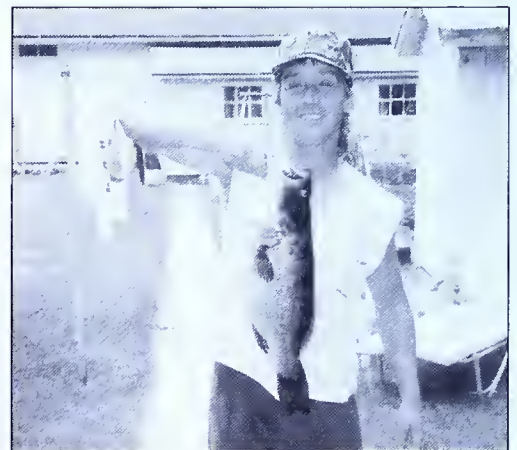
I used a large chub to catch this walleye while fishing French Creek in Cochranston. The fish weighed 11 pounds and was 30 1/2 inches long. I have been an Angler subscriber since 1943 when it cost 50 cents per year; and I think the current price of \$9 is still a bargain!—George Fix, Pittsburgh, PA.



Cresco resident David Carpenter caught and released this smallmouth bass. The fish weighed 3 1/2 pounds and was 19 1/2 inches long. An avid catch-and-release angler, David says a camera is the best way to keep a trophy.



Nelson Hoover, of Smbury, caught this nice smallmouth bass last August. The fish weighed 5 pounds, 15 ounces and measured 22 1/4 inches long. Nice fish, Nelson!



Michael Wills, of Mechanicsburg, landed this nice largemouth bass using a Grass Ratt. The 5.3-pound, 21-inch fish was taken from a state gamelands pond in York County.

Cast and Caught



Dick Duffy, of Kane, caught this nice tiger muskellunge last February while fishing at the East Branch Dam in Elk County. The fish, caught on a tip-up baited with a sncker, was 48 inches long and weighed 28 1/2 pounds. Nice going, Dick!



Ten-year-old Ben Thimons used a sucker to catch this husky musky last fall. The Allegheny Reservoir fish weighed 29 pounds and was 49 inches long. Terrific job, Ben!



This hefty walleye took Robert Kenny's lure while he was fishing Lake Erie. The Erie angler used a spoon to fool this 11-pound, six-ounce fish. Nice going, Robert!



Brad Vinglish, of Dysart, enticed this muskellunge to strike using a tip-up baited with a shiner. The fish weighed 32 pounds and was 50 1/4 inches long.

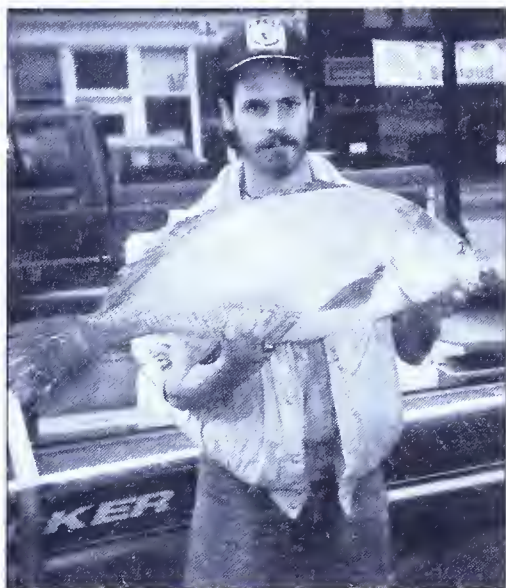


Lee Buckland, of Levittown, earned a Senior Angler's Award for this largemouth bass. The fish, caught out of the Delaware River, weighed in at 6 pounds, 10 ounces and was 22 1/2 inches long.



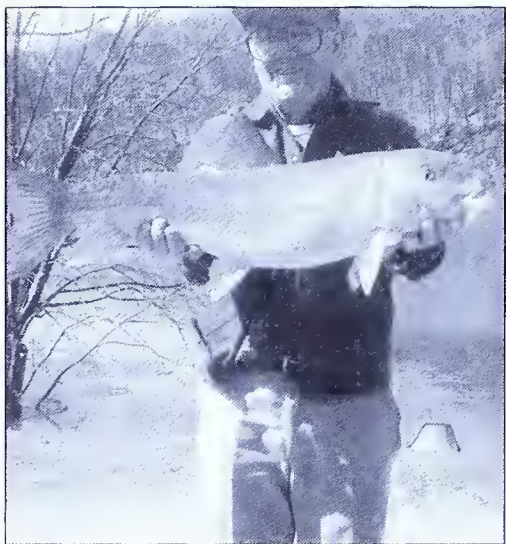
Nicholson resident Bill Leventhall used a minnow to entice this largemouth bass to strike. The fish, caught out of White Oak Pond, weighed 6 pounds, 1 ounce and was 22 inches long.

Anglers Currents



New Freshwater Drum State Record

Monaca resident Raymond Maylone, Jr., hefts the freshwater drum he caught while fishing the Beaver River (Beaver County) on April 16, 1993. The fish, a new state record, weighed 19 pounds, 4 ounces and was 32 inches long. Maylone nailed the drum with a quarter-ounce jig and pork trailer. The previous state record was a 15-pounder caught in 1977 in Lake Erie by Gary Wehrle, of Erie.



New Sucker State Record

John McClellan, of Tionesta, shows off the new state-record sucker he caught while fishing the Allegheny River in Venango County. The fish, caught March 30, 1993, with a worm, was 30 1/4 inches long and weighed 11 pounds. The former state-record sucker weighed 10 pounds, 11 ounces, and was caught in 1983 also in the Venango County portion of the Allegheny River by Daniel Waugaman, of Franklin.



U.S. COAST GUARD
BOATING SAFETY HOTLINE:
1-800-368-5647

Boating Safety Recall Information
Report Possible Safety Defects in Boats
Answers to Boating Safety Questions

Kodrich Receives Abele Award

Dr. William Kodrich has been honored by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to become the third recipient of the Ralph W. Abele Heritage Award.

Kodrich distinguished himself by making outstanding contributions to the preservation, restoration and enhancement of coldwater resources at local, state and national levels. As a fisheries biologist and biometrician, Dr. Kodrich has provided the scientific and technical assistance to further the cause of aquatic conservation.

Kodrich's achievements are numerous, and it is well-known that he has been influential in teaching youngsters the sport of fishing while interweaving the need for the conservation ethic. A recipient of many conservation awards, Kodrich noted during his acceptance speech at the Fish and Boat Commission meeting held April 26 that, "Of all the awards I have received, the Ralph W. Abele Award is the most meaningful."

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission established the Ralph W. Abele Conservation Heritage Award to recognize citizens of Pennsylvania who have made outstanding contributions to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the aquatic resources of the Commonwealth. The award serves as a memorial to Ralph W. Abele, former Commission Executive Director, for his steadfast and courageous work in protecting and conserving our natural resources. Dr. Kodrich joins Ken Sink and Dr. Maurice Goddard as recipients of the award.



Flyte Named Officer of the Year

Waterways Conservation Officer Ellsworth E. Flyte, better known to those he serves as "Bud," has been named 1992 Officer of the Year. Flyte received the award at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference Banquet held at Atlantic City, New Jersey, on April 20.

Flyte began his career with the Fish and Boat Commission in September 1972. After attending the Commission's training school, Flyte was assigned to Somerset County and has served as its waterways conservation officer since 1975. Married with one son, Flyte enjoys fishing and hunting when he is not patrolling one of the county's streams or lakes.

According to Edward Manhart, Chief of the Commission Bureau of Law Enforcement, "Bud exemplifies what we all seek in a waterways conservation officer. From law enforcement to public relations to instructing others in the sport, Bud is the kind of officer we are proud to have in the field and is well-deserving of this prestigious award."



**TAKE A
FRIEND
FISHING**

NATIONAL FISHING WEEK
JUNE 7-13, 1993

Anglers Currents

Tackle Purchases Aid Education

Did you know that your fishing tackle purchase helped a sixth grade class learn about the Susquehanna River? Or that it helped introduce the great sport of fishing to a Westmoreland County Cub Scout den? Through the Fish and Boat Commission's Keystone Aquatic Resource Education (KARE) program, classroom educators, Scout leaders and others involved in outdoor education receive training and materials to aid them in teaching about the Keystone State's aquatic resources.

So what's the connection between your new fish finder and aquatic education? The Commission receives federal funding under the Sport Fish Restoration Act. This act places an excise tax on fishing tackle purchases and boating accessories. States are then permitted to use up to 10 percent of that money on aquatic resource education. Through KARE, Pennsylvania has been recognized as a leader in aquatic resource education.

KARE began in 1989, and since then more than 2,500 educators have completed the 15-hour workshops. These educators receive a package of materials designed to help them teach about Pennsylvania's water resources, the inhabitants of these waters, and how humans affect these areas. These materials, which emphasize a hands-on approach, are approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The KARE program also has a fishing skills section, which began in 1992. In this program, adults are certified as Fishing Skills Instructors and taught to lead fishing skills clinics. These clinics can be held at camps or county parks for youth groups and clubs. The focus of the clinics is fishing, but instructors also teach aquatic ecology, safety and ethics.

So the next time you buy some new tackle, think about the Scouts or the classroom children who are learning about the importance of clean water—for us and the fish we all like to catch. What better reason do you need to buy more stuff?

For more information on KARE, contact Carl Richardson, KARE Coordinator, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or call 717-657-4518.—*Carl Richardson.*

Susquehanna River Life Celebration

The Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Education Office is sponsoring the Susquehanna River Life Celebration, to be held June 30 on City Island in Harrisburg. In addition to the celebration, other River Life events are scheduled during June. A concert by the Paul Winter Consort will be held at the Forum in Harrisburg on June 5. A craft exhibit with the theme *We All Live Downstream* is scheduled for June 6 through 30 at the East Wing of the Capitol Building in Harrisburg. For more information on these events, contact the Bay Education Office, 225 Pine Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101, or call 717-236-1006.

Boater's Checklist

The Fish & Boat Commission offers these tips for a basic safety and maintenance inspection of your fishing boat before you launch.

- ✓ Check fuel lines for leaks and replace cracked or stiff hoses. Make sure clamps are tight and corrosion-free.
- ✓ Inspect the prop for dings or pitting and to ensure that cotter pins are secure. A wobbly prop suggests a bent prop shaft.
- ✓ Tighten all the nuts, bolts and screws on your boat and trailer.
- ✓ Check your aluminum boat's rivets. Loose ones should be replaced.
- ✓ Measure your boat trailer tire pressure. Keep the trailer tires at the pounds-per-square-inch (PSI) rating listed on the sidewall.

Protect Your Child

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, more than 80 percent of boating fatalities involve people not wearing personal flotation devices (PFDs)—many of these fatalities are children.

The American Pediatrics Society says drowning is the number one cause of death among children. It also reports that children under the age of seven cannot don a PFD by themselves, and those between seven and 12 cannot arrange tasks without formal training. Lower your child's risk of drowning from a boating accident, outfit each youngster with a properly fitted and adjusted PFD before you get under way.

Here are some tips:

- PFDs come in child weight ranges: under 30 pounds, 30-50 pounds, 50-90 pounds, and over 90 pounds. Choose the proper weight range for your child.
- Measure your child's chest under the arms because chest size may also be a factor in choosing the proper PFD.
- Fasten the PFD snugly and lift it at the shoulders—if there is more than three inches of give, it's too big.
- Use the crotch straps—they keep the PFD in place.
- If your child fears the water, consider a collared PFD—an approved Type I or II device.
- Have your child test the PFD in shallow water so that he gets used to wearing it.
- Choose colors that are highly visible.
- Remember that a PFD is not a babysitter—never leave your child alone.

BACKTALK

Would you like a photograph of you and your catch to appear in *Pennsylvania Angler*? Send a photograph of you and your catch to the *Angler* for publication consideration in the "Currents" section. Please send only snapshots and prints, either color or black-and-white. Please—no slides and no pictures larger than 8x10. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your picture returned.

The Fish & Boat Commission also invites you to write letters to the editor in this space if you have an idea on *Pennsylvania Angler* content, a question or concern about the Commission or about fish and fishing, or a helpful idea for anglers or boaters. Letters are edited for clarity and space considerations.

Address correspondence to: Art Michaels, Editor, *Pennsylvania Angler*, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.



Fish & Boat Commissioner Ross J. Huhn (right) presents Trout Unlimited Penns Woods West Chapter president Larry Harris (center) and chapter secretary-treasurer Dick Packer (left) with a Pennsylvania trout/salmon stamp conservation & education print. The presentation recognizes the chapter's \$1,000 contribution to the Commission's CAP (Conservation Acquisition Partnership) Program. The CAP Program is a Commission fund for land acquisition to which anyone can contribute. The TU chapter is the program's first \$1,000 contributor. Commissioner Huhn made the presentation at the chapter's meeting last April.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Angler's Notebook *by David A. Wonderlich*

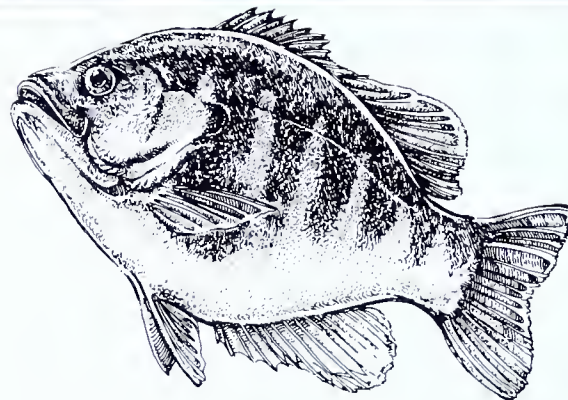
Fillet panfish shortly after catching them and keep them on ice if the day is hot. Panfish dipped in flour or cornmeal and fried in margarine to a golden brown are a table delight second to none.

When wading while fishing, always wear a wading belt regardless of water temperature or swimming ability. After entering the water, loosen the belt to allow the water pressure to force out the air between your skin and waders, and then refasten the belt. If you fall, the belt not only keeps water out for some length of time, but because there is little trapped air, the feet and legs won't pop into the air and hold your head below the surface.

When fishing with children, include activities such as collecting flying insects with a butterfly net, looking under submerged rocks for nymphs (which change into flies), and feeling the different currents and water temperatures while swimming. These activities help children become better anglers, and understand the interdependence of one part of the environment on another.

You don't have to put your spinning lures away when summer comes. As water levels drop and streams become clearer with hot weather, to continue fooling fish, use smaller spinners with a careful presentation during daylight hours.

The Adams and Light Cahill are two flies the beginning fly-fisher should always have on hand. In sizes from 10 to 28, they give the impression of insects, from the largest mayflies to the smallest midges, which hatch throughout the summer.



In early June, sunfish, yellow perch, rock bass and crappies enter the shallow water near shore to spawn. Unlike other species of fish that don't feed during the spawn, panfish go on a feeding binge unequaled throughout the year. A small bobber above a red worm, dry flies, and even small bread balls on a size 10 hook take these prolific fish.

During the first two weeks of June, large numbers of frogs congregate along the shallow edges of our creeks to reproduce. In the evening and during the night, trout enter these stream edges to gorge on the frogs. A frog-imitation lure, Jitterbug, or deer hair "frog" worked along the fringe of the shallows can help you fool large trout.

If you must use a light when fishing for trout at night, always shine the flashlight away from the water. The glare of a light is a sure way to put down big trout.

If the trout swirl but won't hit your flies, let your dry imitation sink under the surface. Then give it an occasional twitch as it rides the current. There is a good chance the swirls were caused by trout taking emerging flies, and your dry just beneath the surface may be exactly what they are looking for.

illustration- Ted Walke

On the Water

with Dave Wolf

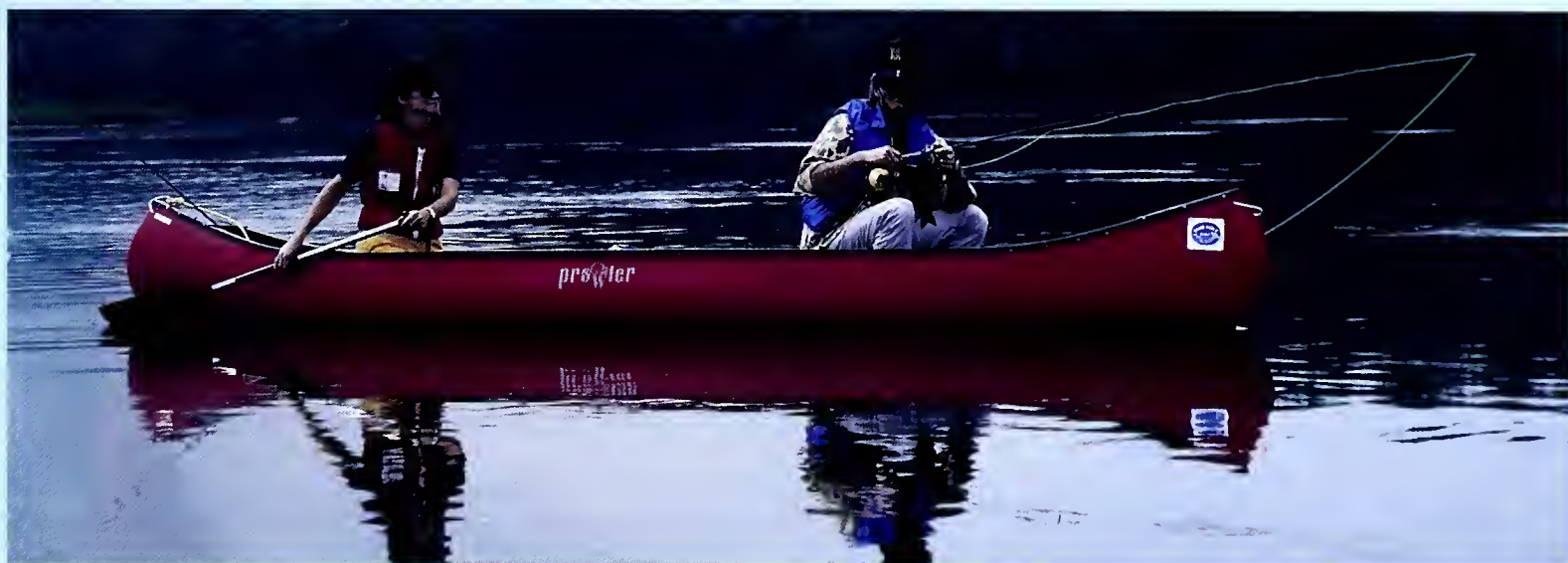
The Smallmouth of a River

The current is swift as I work my way across the ledges that lead to the deeper pockets and glides where the smallmouths reside. The river is similar to many of the larger trout waters in Montana and other western states, and I find this river to be one of my favorites. The smallmouth is a well-adapted fish, and a resurgence of its popularity is well-known and written about.

The waters run deceptively fast, and the rock ledge can lead to a deep hole that can leave you swimming if you are not careful. It is a river with fish that allow you sufficient reason to pur-

ation, poor sewage systems and dam builders threaten the free-flowing wealth of a river that sustains one of the finest smallmouth bass populations in the East. Of course, Mother Nature often casts her spell on the river's inhabitants, and poor water conditions and bad weather can lead to negated spawning success. There will be good years and bad, leading to voids in certain size classes of fish. Few anglers realize that "off" years come and go regularly at nature's command.

Depending on wild fish to populate a river is often without continuity. Stocking fish will do the river and its fish an injus-



chase another rod, and to garner more and different lures than you would for trout waters.

The water deepens and I find a secure location near a duckweed bed. Geese honk and circle overhead—they winter here now, apparently the result of a succession of mild winters. I welcome their sight and sounds, and they are now an integral part of my fishing days at this special place of mine on the river.

Downstream utilities have agreed to place fish lifts at their facilities, and I am hopeful that in my time I will find silver fish fresh from the ocean coming to my section of the river—fish that historically resided here and should be welcomed back with open arms. Shad are part of the history of the river and in time, during April in the not-so-distant future, I hope to be casting to this tremendous gamefish.

I cast to the river using a 9-foot rod equipped with an 8-weight line. A leader scaled down to a 10-pound tippet turns the popper over with ease, and if I work the bug faster than the current, I will surely catch some bass, perhaps many. Downriver on the trophy stretch, anglers are enjoying the new size and creel limits. They report that 14- to 15-inch smallies are becoming commonplace. It proves what can be done with proper management and the support of the fishing populous.

But the river, like all forms of life, has its weaknesses. Silt-

tice and will not improve the resource that has been long established here.

So we accept the bad and the good years, often without understanding—anglers often are not as aware of habitat as hunters. I believe that the habitat of a fishery is sealed in secrecy by flowing waters. The flowing waters do not allow one to explore the areas where fish reside, and understanding must often come from scientific research or by spending years on a certain stretch of water to understand its complexities.

I am like that—a bit of a home body—more intent on learning a river or stream section than fishing the entire body of water. I think it comes with age. I want more insight into my fishing and I cover less water than I did once. I'm more intent on working a half-mile stretch or so and finding out where the bass frequent "my" section of the river.

So I wait as the sun slips to another sector of our revolving earth, and as expected, the bass begin to surface-feed on the shelf just above the deep pool. The geese have settled down, but I still hear their constant chatter. I cast my bug above a single rise and there is a slurping take. The rod bends and the fish pumps line from the reel. It is the reason I have come. It is the reason I will return.



PATTERN SELECTION

CHART

BY CHARLES R. MEE

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
APRIL		
Blue Quill—18	Blue Quill—18	Dark Brown Spinner—18
Blue Dun—16-20	Quill Gordon—14	Red Quill—12 or 14
Quill Gordon—14	Red Quill—14	
Hendrickson—14 or 16	Hendrickson—12 or 14	
	Black Quill—12 or 14	
	Little Black Caddis—16	
	Grannom—12-16	
MAY		
Blue Quill—18	Hendrickson—12	Red Quill—12
Blue Dun—18 or 20	Red Quill—14	Gray Fox—12
Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	Green Caddis—14	Grannom—12
	Grannom—12-16	Sulphur Pale Evening Dun—16
	Sulphur Pale Evening Dun—16	Spotted Sedge—16
	Spotted Sedge—16	March Brown—12
	March Brown—12	Slate Drake—12
	Gray Fox—12	Light Cahill—12
	Green Drake—10-16	Green Drake—10-12
		Brown Drake—12
		Ginger Quill—12
		Cream Cahill—14
JUNE		
Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	March Brown—12	Ginger Quill—12
Blue Quill—18	Gray Fox—12	Green Drake—10
	Blue Quill—18	Coffin Fly—10
	Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	Dark Olive Spinner—14
	Chocolate Dun—16	Dark Blue Sedge—12
		Brown Drake—12
		Sulphur Pale Evening Dun—16
		Light Cahill—12
		Yellow Drake—12
		Golden Drake—12
		Cream Cahill—14
JULY		
Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	Blue Dun—20	Slate Drake—12
Blue Quill—18	Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	Light Cahill—12
Dark Brown Spinner—14		Pale Evening Dun—16
Trico—24		Yellow Drake—12
		Dark Olive Spinner—14
		Cream Cahill—14-16
AUGUST		
Blue Quill—18	Blue Dun—20	White Mayfly—14
Trico—24	Blue-Winged Olive Dun—14	Slate Drake—12
		Light Cahill—12
		Cream Cahill—14-16
SEPTEMBER		
Trico—24	Slate Drake—14	White Mayfly—14
	Little Blue Dun—20	Cream Cahill—14
		Slate Drake—14
OCTOBER		
Trico—24	Slate Drake—14	
	Little Blue Dun—20	
	Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun—20	

This chart lists fly patterns that might be best during certain times. Let these selections help you narrow the number of imitations you carry.



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Pennsylvania **ANGLER**



MAY 28 1993

Straight Talk

PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Fishing is Big in Pennsylvania

Preliminary findings of the 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation were recently released by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Unfortunately, these findings have caused some confusion as people attempted to compare these results with those of previous surveys. A major part of the 1991 survey was done with a different methodology, thereby making detailed comparisons with earlier survey results inaccurate.

The 1991 survey, which was done by the U. S. Census Bureau, contacted respondents every four months, but previous surveys were done at the end of 12-month periods. Recent research has revealed that people were overstating their participation and expenditures when asked to recall over a 12-month period. Therefore, indications are that the 1991 survey results are more accurate than earlier efforts.

There continued to be a need, however, for comparative trend information. Program managers need recreational participation and spending trend data because it is an important ingredient of program planning.

To meet this need, the Service determined that the methodology for comparing preliminary screening data was consistent with earlier results, and therefore the screening data could be used to determine trends in fishing and wildlife recreation.

Interpretation of the screening data provides the following trends for nationwide fishing activity during the 1980-1990 decade:

- The number of anglers rose 20 percent over the decade while the number of hunters was essentially stable.
- Spending on fishing rose 56 percent during the 1980s.
- Overall there was a 15 percent increase in the number of days spent fishing.

In addition, the survey revealed that from 1985 to 1990, there was an 11 percent increase in the number of anglers and a 27 percent increase in fishing expenditures, even though anglers spent about the same number of days fishing.

These trends closely parallel Pennsylvania's experiences. Increased fishing participation has been apparent to all sportsmen this past decade. Although resident license sales have increased only about 3.5 percent, the number of non-resident licensed fishermen has increased nearly 50 percent. A great number of senior fishermen have purchased lifetime licenses, which has slowed the rate of annual resident license sales. There are also indications that Pennsylvania fishermen are spending more time and money pursuing their sport, with the resultant favorable effect on Pennsylvania's economy. The 1991 survey estimates that nearly 1.4 million adult Pennsylvania anglers participated in 1991 while spending nearly \$678 million. Fishing continues to be big in Pennsylvania.



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Pennsylvania ANGLER

The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

May 1993 Vol. 62 No. 5

The Poconos' Fish for All Seasons by Tom Fegely

Pickrel can be caught throughout the year, but during the first few weeks of the May season, that activity peaks. And the Poconos have always been the stronghold for pickrel action.....4

Northeast Pennsylvania Walleyes by Jeff Knapp

In northeast Pennsylvania you can find some of the state's better walleye waters, particularly in terms of producing big walleyes.....8

My 80 Best Trout Outings by Mark A. Nale

An avid trout angler analyzes his very best trout fishing trips, and the results might surprise you.....12

Conneaut Lake's Big Fish by Darl Black

Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, supports one of Pennsylvania's best warmwater fisheries. Use this information to score on Conneaut like a pro.....16

Headwaters Fly-Fishing School by Mike Bleech

Check out the details in this advanced course on fly-fishing freestone headwater trout streams.....21

The Magnificent Seven by Jeff Mulhollem

There's no magic, rocket science or voodoo here—just seven nymphs that work best in Pennsylvania and how to fish them.....24

Seeing Double by Charles R. Meck

When different kinds of insects hatch on a stream all at once, which one do you imitate to catch trout? Where in Pennsylvania can you experience multiple hatches?.....27

On the Water with Dave Wolf

Pushing it to the limit.....31

Many Trout, Few Anglers by Tom Greene

In May and June, the crowds of trout anglers have dispersed, leaving many streams with plenty of trout and few anglers. Here are 46 terrific spots across Pennsylvania.....32

The cover

This issue's front-cover crappie was photographed by Wally Eberhart. All of us anglers would like to score as this issue's cover suggests. But sometimes becoming a better fisherman requires momentarily stepping back from the stream bank and studying one's fishing. At what time of day do you catch the most fish? Which month is your best angling month? What is the water temperature when you catch the most? Trout fisherman Mark A. Nale examines his 80 best trout outings exactly this way, and the results, which begin on page 12, can help you score more. The results also show you how to survey your own success. In the article on page 21, author Mike Bleech guides us through the specifics of how to fish freestone headwater trout streams, and on page 24, Jeff Mulhollem makes a strong case for the seven nymph patterns than can handle all of our state's nymph-fishing possibilities—and how to fish them. Warmwater opportunities abound this month, too. Tom Fegely reveals the best Pocono pickrel places on page 4, and Jeff Knapp points out northeast Pennsylvania's best walleye spots. Anglers in western Pennsylvania will want to check out Darl Black's article on Conneaut Lake, on page 16.

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The Poconos' Fish for All Seasons

by Tom Fegely



Of a hundred or so fishing books in my library, none features the pickerel. Authors have penned works on bass, trout, pike, salmon, catfish, panfish and stripers—even carp. But the lowly chainside—the Rodney Dangerfield of the fish world—gets little respect.

Bass fishermen who hook “hammer-handles,” the nickname for the skinny, sub-size fish, curse them. But many anglers cast specifically for pickerel, enjoying the steady action they provide throughout the four seasons.

You won’t come across many pickerel specialists. A few senior-citizen friends like to spin tales of the early days of pickerel fishing on Pecks Pond, still a popular vacation spot for folks in neighboring New York and New Jersey and south through the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia. They talk of Lazy Ikes, pork rinds on Johnson Silver Minnows and “skittering” a dead minnow or a strip of pork across a weed bed with a long cane pole.

The Poconos have always been the stronghold for pickerel, even though they’ve been stocked across the Commonwealth.

I’ve never caught them on cane poles, but maybe one of these days I’ll give it a try. Sounds like fun.

The first pickerel I ever saw came thrashing to the side of the canoe back in the early 1950s during a family vacation at Promised Land State Park in Pike County. I had no idea what it was, and when the old-timers manning the canoe rental told me it was a “snake,” I became even more confused.

Later that day, as I proudly paraded my 20-inch “snake” around the neighborhood, another angler told me it was a chain pickerel—not a species that lived in the streams and farm ponds near my Lehigh County home.

The last pickerel to test my line was caught last February—through the ice on Shohola Lake, another Pocono Mountain waterway where this fish for all seasons dwells.

Indeed, more citation-size pickerel are taken through the ice than at any other time of the year, according to Fish & Boat Commission records. A 3-inch to 4-inch shiner dropped from a tip-up in weedy shallows or along nearby dropoffs is the simple procedure by which anglers take most winter pickerel.

Unlike pike and muskies, pickerel are not spectacular fighters, nor do they attain the lengths and weights of their sizable relatives. Yet, on 6-pound or 8-pound-test line and with a light-medium rod with a “whippy” tip, they can put on a short spectacle. They roll, jump and twist, sometimes winding themselves in the line, particularly when hooked on a plug. Most often, however, they wind themselves in aquatic vegetation, which puts a quick stop to any performance.

The Poconos have always been the stronghold for pickerel,

even though they've been stocked across the Commonwealth. The dark, tannic acid-stained waters and a few streams and rivers flowing into and out of the lakes also hold them.

For the record, the Pocono Mountains are geologically defined as an area encompassing Monroe and portions of Pike, Wayne, Carbon, Luzerne and Wayne counties. Its fringes extend as far east as the Delaware River, west to the Moosic Mountain, south to the Kittatinny Ride of the Appalachians and gradually sloping north toward Honesdale. As an all-season playground, promoters stretch the Poconos a bit more.

Nowhere in the state is the pickerel as traditional a spring attraction. Here in the acid-stained ponds and lakes it's thrived for centuries.

I know of no better fish to whet a child's appetite for learning how to work artificial lures. Pickerel hit live offerings, too. But in lakes where these "snakes" and their bigger relatives live, even small pickerel can provide big times for both novice and experienced anglers.

Maybe I'm prejudiced because a pickerel was the longest fish I ever caught before age 10.

Even though the pickerel is much like its bigger cousins, pike and muskies, it's not nearly as difficult to hook. In most Pocono Mountain lakes, its abundance creates competition, and a bobber-controlled minnow, plug or spinner will draw plenty of attention.

Pickerel can be caught throughout the year, but during the first few weeks of the May season, that activity peaks. It's also easier then to get a spinner or plug to the lurking fish because algae and weeds have yet to take hold. Most shallow lakes, such as Shohola and Pecks Pond, become weed-infested by June and near-constant fouling is the rule. Getting your offering to the places where pickerel hide can be frustrating.

Favorite technique

My favorite way of catching pickerel is little different from catching largemouth bass—hooking them on the surface. The technique is pretty much limited to the first weeks of May and again in late fall when heavy vegetation dies. I've also had luck with them just before deer season on a day when our rod guides iced up. Then they hit jigs and slow-moving spinners.

Rapalas, Rebels and any other fish-imitations of 3 to 5 inches in silver or gold grab a chainside's attention. Spinners or shallow-diving crankbaits and narrow-lipped plugs trolled just under the surface are also productive along the edges of weed beds.

Later in the season I opt for the time-tested weed-proof Johnson Silver Minnow or an imitation, embellished with a strip of pork rind or even a dead minnow hooked through the lips. Large, size 2 single-hook spinners also work well, but the weedless spoons are less likely to draw snags. Award-sized catches have been taken on Mepps, Roostertail, Vibrax and Shyster spinners in recent years.

The pickerel, like its larger relatives, is primarily a fish-eater, and a live shiner is irresistible. Snare it under the dorsal fin on a size 4 long-shank hook and toss it along the edge of a weed bed. When control is necessary (to keep the minnow from snagging in weeds), attach a golfball-sized bobber 3 to 5 feet above the hook.

Any discussion of live-bait fishing for pickerel brings the question of whether or not a wire leader helps. Pickerel, true to their clan, have jaws studded with sharp teeth, and the recommended 6-pound or 8-pound monofilament line is easily gouged as a pickerel twists and jumps when hooked.



I've fished with folks who tie on 12-pound-test to 15-pound-test leaders to withstand any brushes with a pickerel's dental work. Others stick to light wire leaders. A few, convinced that the heavier line spooks fish, take their chances on losing a few fish and hooks.

It's worth mentioning that a pickerel's feeding technique differs from that of a bass, with which it shares its Pocono waters. A pickerel typically grabs a live bait crosswise, after which the fish swims a short distance, stops, and then manipulates the minnow headfirst before swallowing.

Live-bait fishing with an open bail lets you watch the bobber's course as the fish makes off with the bait. When the bobber stops, close the bail and set the hook.

Other artificials attractive to pickerel include spinnerbaits, jerk baits and even plastic worms or "lizards." The latter soft baits can be Texas-rigged and fished without weight, a sure method for penetrating vegetation in summer.

A warning: Stick plenty of plastic worms in the tackle box if you're planning to fish with such a rig. Many hook sets will yield nothing more than sliced or nipped baits, especially if you set the hook too soon. Patience is the key to allowing the pickerel to swim off a short distance before setting the hook.

Anglers wanting to make sport of even the oft-cursed hammer-handle pickerel may want to try fly-fishing. No need to be concerned with what's hatching or tying a fancy streamer here. The combination of red woven with silver or white does the trick.

Here's a fly that works: Wrap red yard around a long-shanked size 10 or 8 hook, and tie on a few long, white saddle hackles. You could wrap silver tinsel around the red yard, if you like. Then build up a head with fly tying cement.

It should be noted that most pickerel caught in a day's casting will be small. Even a legal keeper "chain-fish," measuring 15 inches or better, seem small because of their slim proportions. Even though there's a tendency to throw even legal-sized catches back, you might want to keep some for the kitchen.

Like panfish, pickerel can overpopulate many lakes, and culling the legal “little ones” won’t hurt the ecosystem.

Great eating

Pickerel are notoriously bony, containing a row of Y-shaped bones running lengthwise along the fillets, just above the rib cage. But their white flesh is tasty, especially in the cold, cool months. Cut the Y-bones of larger fish before cooking, but for smaller pickerel the alternative is to pluck the Y-bones out after cooking or simply eat the meat “campground style,” with your fingers, while staying alert for the splinter-thin bones.

One item of equipment that’s a must when pickerel fishing is needle-nose pliers or better yet, a commercial hook disgorging. Trying to remove a hook with a gloveless hand sooner or later (probably sooner) results in fine cuts on your fingers. One slip and those needle-sharp dentures can cause some bloody and painful, albeit small, cuts.

Hotspots

The Poconos is a stronghold for Pennsylvania pickerel, even though many other lakes have been stocked with them in the past decade. If you’re planning a visit to this vacationland, here are some lake suggestions big and small.

Shohola Lake. The state record chain pickerel measuring 31.5 inches and weighing 8 pounds was taken from the old Shohola Dam in 1937, long before the present dam was built in the mid-1960s. Owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and managed as waterfowl habitat, it’s a hotspot for pickerel, and the lake yields some sizable bass, too.

Shohola’s 1,137 acres hold shallow waters with abundant vegetation, deadfalls and standing flooded trees. It’s ideal pickerel habitat. Only electric motors are permitted.

You can get to Shohola along Route 6 between Lake Wallenpaupack and Milford in Pike County.

Pecks Pond. This is the standard reference point by which old-timers explain the locations of other Pike County waters. Its 300 acres become covered with vegetation in summer, and fishing is limited to live bait in most places.

Motors are limited to electric only.

A bait and tackle shop is located on the lake, set along Route 402 north of Marshalls Creek.

Promised Land Lake. Popular with summer vacationers to Promised Land State Park, visitors can fish the 420-acre Upper Lake or the Lower Lake’s 173 acres.

Submerged wood is abundant, and some areas fill with vegetation in summer. Canoes can be rented at the park concession, and several launch sites provide easy access. Only electric motors may be used.

Promised Land’s lakes are located just off Route 390 in Pike County.

Egypt Meadows, Bruce Lake. This scenic wilderness area is located on the northern end of Promised Land State Park. Egypt Meadows is a shallow, 60-acre pond a short hike off Route 590. Casting from shore or wading is recommended.

Follow the well-worn trail past Egypt Meadows to Bruce Lake, a 51-acre glacial lake nearly three miles off the road. Crafts are permitted, but you have to cart an inflatable or light canoe with you.

A visit here on a warm spring day will please the whole family.

Fairview Lake. This waterway is a unique lake with water deep enough to hold trout and bass and sufficiently shallow to maintain populations of pickerel. Despite its small size of only

195 acres, unlimited horsepower is permitted. A Fish & Boat Commission access is located on Tafton Road just off Route 390, near Promised Land and Lake Wallenpaupack.

Lake Wallenpaupack. This is the grand-daddy of Pocono Mountain lakes—a 5,700-acre impoundment on the Pike and Wayne County line. It’s known more for black bass and striped bass, walleye and trout, but pickerel can be caught in the many weedy coves along its 52-mile shoreline. Unlimited horsepower motors are permitted.

Wallenpaupack is located along routes 6, 507 and 590 with a Fish & Boat Commission access off Route 6.

Bradys Lake. This Fish & Boat Commission waterway covers 250 acres and is deeper than most other Pocono lakes. However, the backwaters and shorelines are shallow with sufficient weeds to hold pickerel.

You can get to the lake by way of a narrow paved road leading off Route 940 east of Blakeslee.

Gouldsboro Lake. Set on the Wayne-Monroe County border in Gouldsboro State Park, this 290-acre lake permits electric motors. Pickerel are abundant and fishing for them is popular in the summer and winter. The lake is located off Route 507 near I-380.

Tobyhanna lakes. Another popular state park choice is the pair of lakes in Tobyhanna State Park, immediately south of Gouldsboro. The larger lake spans 170 acres, and both lakes allow the use of electric motors. The lakes are accessible via I-380 and Route 243.

Hidden Lake. This little-known pond that holds pickerel is part of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. It’s a perfect lake for a family outing, offering swimming in the warm months. Boating is not permitted and unnecessary on the 40-acre Monroe County water.

It’s accessible off Route 209 and from River Road north of Shawnee.

Lake Greeley. Located northeast of Shohola Lake along Route 6 in Pike County, Greeley’s 60 acres offer numerous pickerel. The long, narrow pond contains sufficient weed growth and open water for both live bait and artificial lures.

White Deer Lake. This small (49 acres) Pike County pond is deep with plenty of cover along the shoreline. Boat and shore fishing can be productive. Reach it off Route 402 north of I-84.

Lake Minisink. Only 33 acres and surrounded by state forest cabins, this deep, weedy lake holds both bass and pickerel and recently became approved for trout stocking. Access is via Bushkill Road east of Route 402.

Little Mud Pond. Another of the Poconos’ plentiful mini-lakes, this 20-acre pickerel habitat won’t take much fishing pressure, but it’s a perfect site for a family to cast and catch. It’s located on Delaware State Forest land west of Dingmans Ferry.

Francis Walter Dam. This 90-acre impoundment on the Lehigh River near White Haven on the Carbon-Luzerne County line holds a variety of fish, and in recent years pickerel have taken hold. It’s a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project that permits boats with 10 horsepower or smaller motors.

You can get to this waterway by way of a paved road off Route 940, east of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

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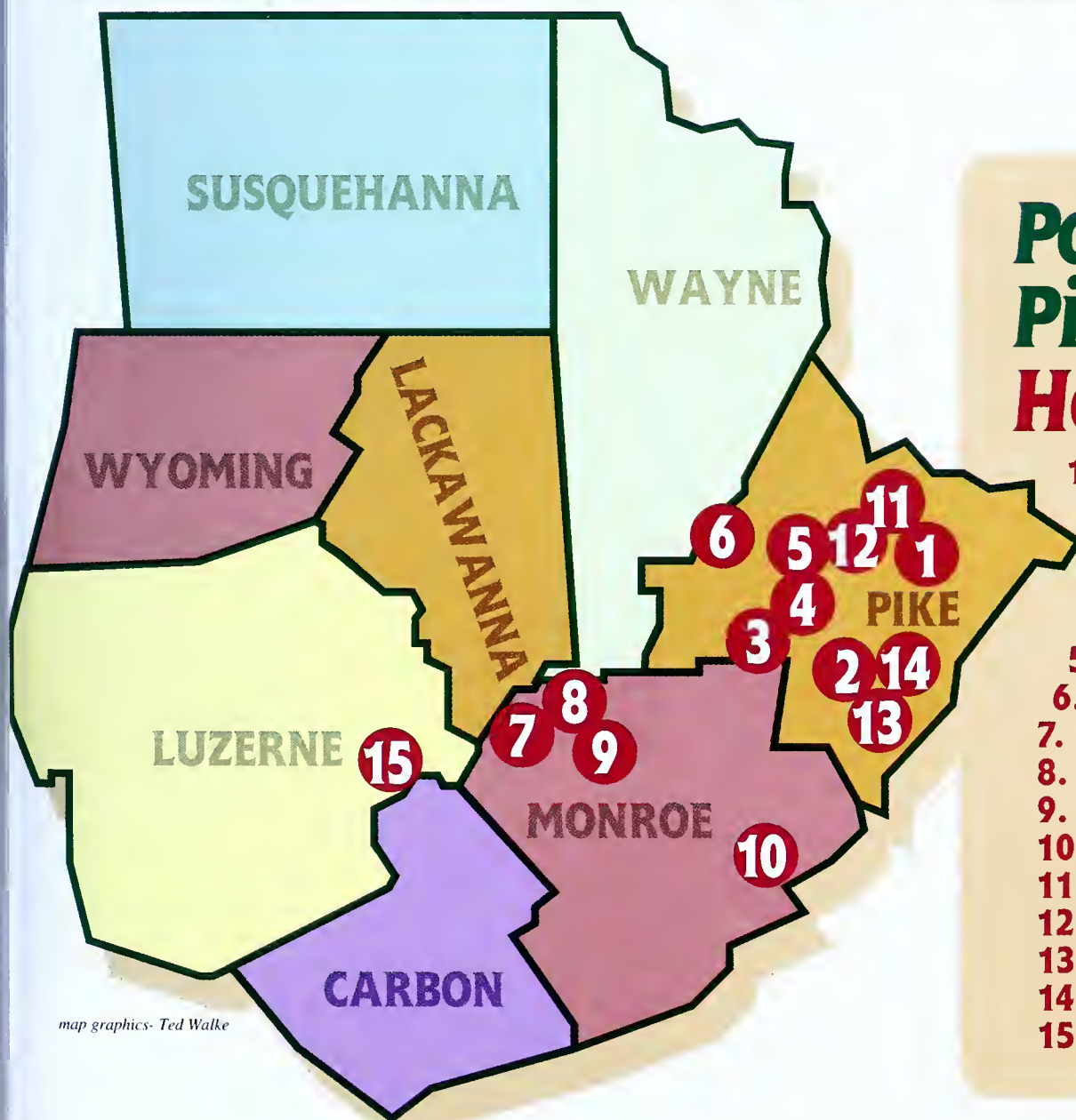
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photo-Tom Fegely

Pocono Pickerel Hotspots

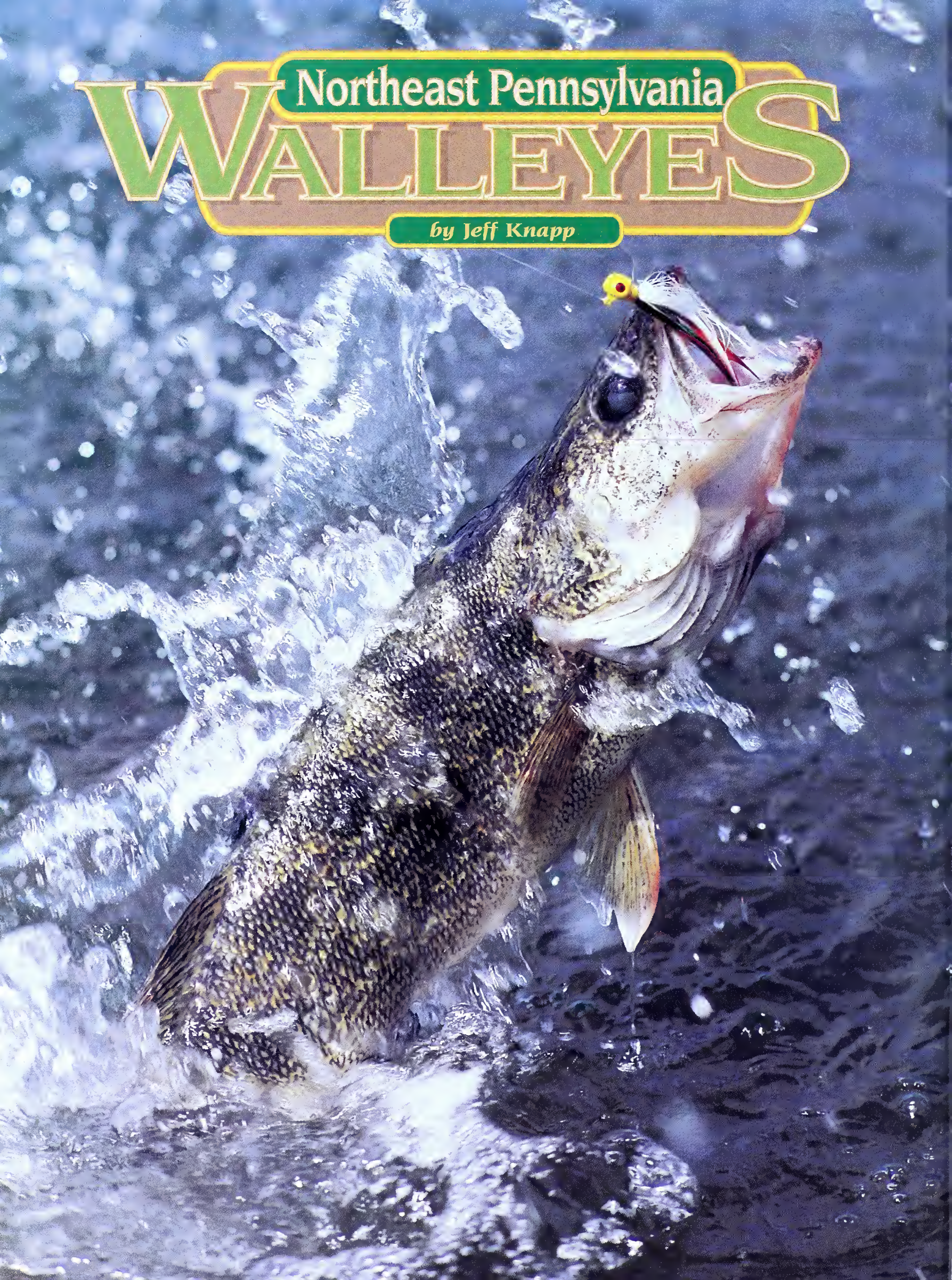
1. Shohola Lake
2. Pecks Pond
3. Promised Land Lake
4. Egypt Meadows,
Bruce Lake
5. Fairview Lake
6. Lake Wallenpaupack
7. Bradys Lake
8. Gouldsboro Lake
9. Tobyhanna Lakes
10. Hidden Lake
11. Lake Greeley
12. White Deer Lake
13. Lake Minisink
14. Little Mud Pond
15. Francis E. Walter Dam



map graphics- Ted Walke

Northeast Pennsylvania WALLEYES

by Jeff Knapp



On a springtime moonlit night, an alewife shad mistakenly breaks free from the security of a school. It pays the ultimate price when a 6-pound walleye devours it.

On another lake, on the opposite side of the mountain range, an angler casts a topwater lure intended for a striped bass. In an aggressive inhaling action, a large fish makes the bait disappear, and the hooks are set. The fisherman is surprised, however, to discover that what he thought was a striped bass turns out to be a big walleye.

Farther east, the heavy flow of a large river begins to warm. The effect of spring is slowly felt. A big female walleye, recuperating from her recent spawning ordeal, rests in a quiet eddy. An unsuspecting sucker minnow falls prey to her as she feeds, an effort to replenish her sagging belly.

In the northeastern portion of Pennsylvania—an area better known for its trout fishing and East Coast tourists—you can find some of the state's better walleye waters, particularly in terms of producing big walleyes.

Harveys Lake is thick with alewife shad, and this protein-packed baitfish has helped create a strong population of big, well-fed walleyes. On the opposite side of the Moosic Mountains, Lake Wallenpaupack also has its share of walleyes, some very big ones, in fact. Often they are caught by anglers targeting striped bass, particularly during the spring.

Flowing water is also part of the picture, with the Delaware River furnishing a fishery where 10-pounders are possible, and smaller fish are fairly common. The Delaware River walleye fishing provides an important cog in the wheel as it gets roll-

ing in the fall, but Harveys and Wallenpaupack tend to be more productive in the spring.

Harveys Lake

The Fish and Boat Commission began stocking walleyes in Harveys Lake in 1985. According to Area 4 Fisheries Man-

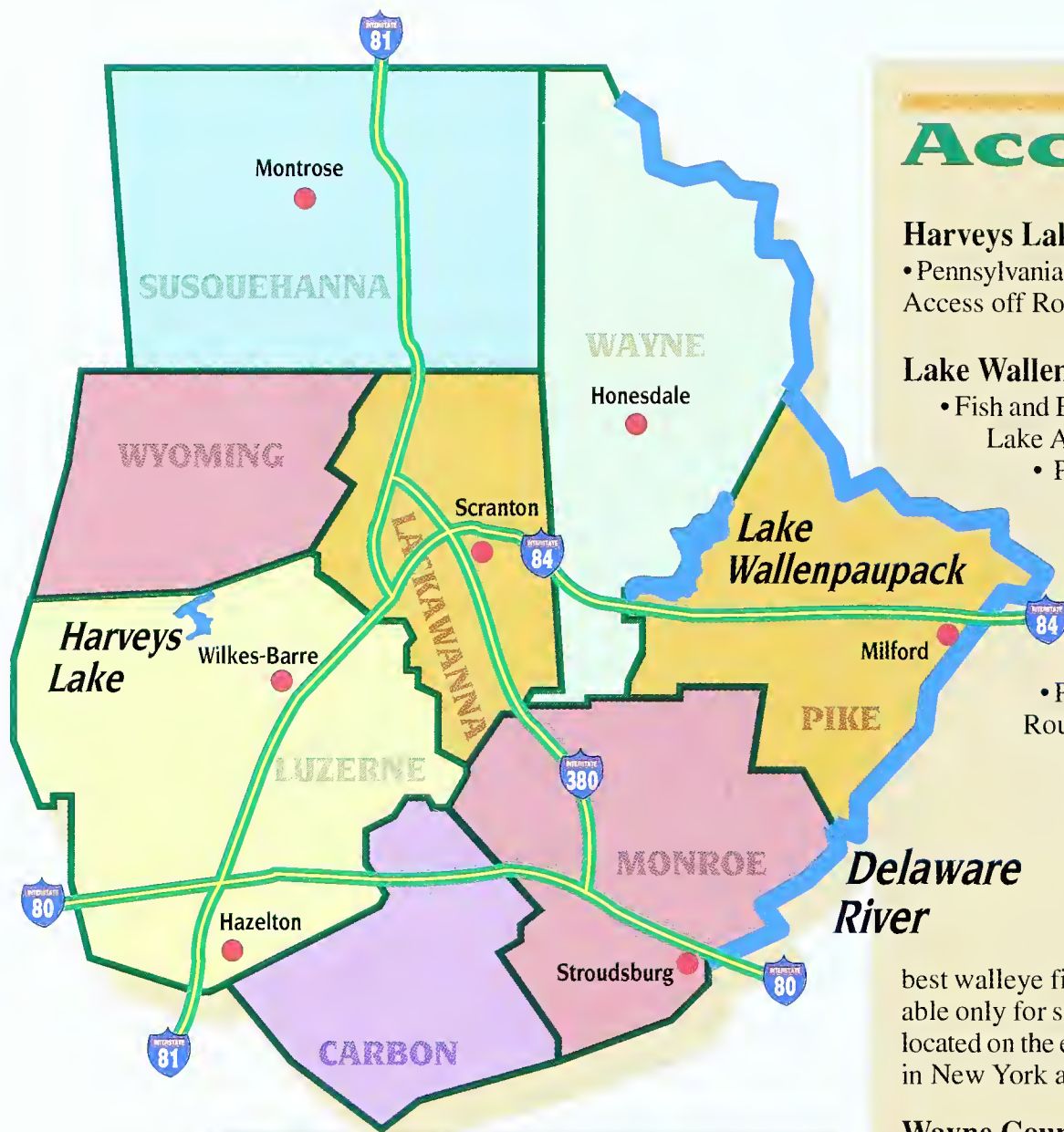


ager Bob Moase, the stocking was discontinued in 1991 because of the relatively high concentration of adult walleyes.

Though the recruitment of stocked walleyes appears high in Harveys Lake, Moase hasn't seen any evidence of natural reproduction.

There is no doubt about the status of the Harveys Lake walleye





Access

Harveys Lake

- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Access off Route 415.

Lake Wallenpaupack

- Fish and Boat Commission's Wallenpaupack Lake Access off Route 590.
- Pennsylvania Power and Light's (PP&L) Wilsonville Recreation Area, off Route 507.
- PP&L's Ironwood Point Recreation Area, off Route 507.
- PP&L's Ledgesdale Recreation Area, off Route 507.
- PP&L's Caffery Recreation Area, off Route 590.

Delaware River

Public access areas are numerous along Pennsylvania's shore of the Delaware River. Below are the ones contained within the four-county stretch of the Delaware offering the best walleye fishing. Some of the areas are suitable only for small boats. Other access areas are located on the eastern shore of the Delaware River in New York and New Jersey.

Wayne County

- PFBC Damascus Access, off Route 371.
- Narrowsburg Access, off Route 652.

Pike County

- Matamoras Access, one mile north of the Route 209 bridge.
- PFBC Bushkill Access, one mile north of Bushkill, off Route 209.
- PFBC Zane Grey Access, on Route 590.
- Eshback Access, 4.5 miles north of Bushkill on Route 590.
- Dingmans Ferry Access, off Route 739 at Dingmans Ferry Bridge.
- Milford Beach Access, off Route 209.
- Matamoras Park, at Matamoras; 10th Street to river.

Monroe County

- Smithfield Beach Access, three miles north of Shawnee-on-the-Delaware.

Northampton County

- PP&L's Access, on Route 611.
- Riverton Access, on Route 1004.
- Sandts Eddy Access, on Route 611.—JK.



population. The fish are definitely there. Catching them, however, can be a different matter. To understand the situation fully, you must understand Harveys Lake itself.

This waterway is a natural lake. Harveys has a highly developed shoreline. The lake is clear, has rapidly dropping shorelines and lots of deep, cold water. Some submergent vegetation in the form of coontail and pondweed (cabbage) is present out to depths of about 12 feet.

Harveys is a recreational boating playground, with a large portion of the shoreline studded with docks. There are no horsepower restrictions. The heavy multi-use flavor of the lake doesn't aid the angler seeking any species, walleyes included.

It's only been during the last year or so that anglers have been targeting the Harveys Lake walleye population. The truth is that the trout and salmon fishery receives a good deal of angler attention, as does the lake's bass population. All gamefish of the lake feed on a substantial population of alewife shad.

Walleye lakes with abundant forage species such as alewives add a further factor to the fishing equation. When you combine a heavily used clear-water lake with a population of alewife-fed walleyes, the ticket to success is clear: Fish at night.

Most all the success gleaned at Harveys Lake occurs after the sun goes down. The shad migrate to shallow water structure, where magnum-sized walleyes ambush them.

Anyone who has ever participated in a successful night of shallow-water walleye fishing will tell you it can be wild. When things really get rockin', baitfish scatter, and the slurping and swirling of feeding walleyes can reach a frantic level. At other times the feeding is less evident, but still present.

At Harveys Lake, many fish are caught from private docks, though permission from the owner would be required to use such a platform. One of the most productive shoreline areas is near the Fish and Boat Commission's public access.

Some anglers score on large, minnow-imitating plugs. Others use more traditional walleye presentations such as minnows and nightcrawlers. Boat anglers have the luxury of either casting, back-trolling or long-line trolling. When night fishing for walleyes, it pays to be well-organized and extra quiet, whether in a boat or on shore.

Lake Wallenpaupack

Lake Wallenpaupack, at 5,700 acres, straddles the Pike/Wayne County border. It was constructed in 1925 by the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company as a means of generating hydroelectric energy. Its recreational benefits now outweigh any power-producing ones.

Traditionally the 'Pack has been a productive walleye water, and the main source of walleye eggs for the Fish and Boat Commission's Pleasant Mount Fish Culture Station.

According to Area 5 Fisheries Manager Dave Arnold, substantial numbers of walleyes are pumped back into the lake.

"Recently we redid the way we stock Wallenpaupack," said Arnold. "Previously, an annual maintenance stocking of one million fry took place." Now four million fry and 100,000 fingerlings are stocked annually. As with Harveys Lake, there is no evidence of natural reproduction in Lake Wallenpaupack.

The 'Pack produces some gargantuan walleyes. Ironically, angler complaints about Wallenpaupack's walleye population reflect worry that only big, old fish are caught there. "Where are the smaller walleyes," is a common concern.

Arnold says the restructured stocking approach should in-

crease the density of walleyes, which will put a wider spectrum of age classes (and sizes) in the lake. Already more "smaller" walleyes are caught in trap nets set by the Commission in the spring to gather breeding stock.

Wallenpaupack stretches 13 miles, with its greatest width reaching two miles. The maximum depth is 60 feet, with a good blend of deep and shallow water. The water is relatively clear. Weed growth is restricted because of water level fluctuations, and the effect of wave/wake action washing away the fertility of the lake's shallow bottom areas. Nevertheless, a small amount of coontail weed does form in water as deep as five or six feet.

Fishing patterns for 'Pack walleyes are nearly identical to those on Harveys Lake, which is not surprising. Wallenpaupack also has a forage base comprised of alewives, and receives heavy boating pressure. Thus, the night bite is a right bite.

The most productive time is considered to be in late May and early June. Walleyes can often be found feeding alongside striped bass. Topwater and shallow-running minnow baits account for most of Wallenpaupack's springtime 'eyes. Propeller-equipped surface baits are said to be particularly effective.

Even though this is a relatively deep lake, there are plenty of areas of shallow water structure that draw nighttime shad and walleyes. Included are all four islands—Epply, Kipp, Burns and Cairns—which have shallow shoals adjacent to them. Rocky shoreline points also attract walleyes, particularly points that extend off a weedline.

Delaware River

The Delaware River provides a stark contrast to the still-water environments of Harveys Lake and Lake Wallenpaupack. The Delaware's walleye bite is consistent with that of other walleye rivers. It's best when the water is cold.

Arnold annually stocks his portion of the river (the lower Delaware is in Area 6) with fingerling walleyes. Despite the stockings, walleye populations fluctuate. Arnold considers the best walleye water to be from Damascus downriver to Sandts Eddy, a lengthy stretch of river that flows along the eastern borders of Wayne, Pike, Monroe and Northampton counties.

The Delaware turns out some nice walleyes, even though the 7-pounders to 10-pounders aren't quite as common now as they were a few years ago. Fish in the 4-pound to 6-pound range regularly comprise the catch of the walleye anglers familiar enough with the Delaware to score.

Last winter, the walleye fishing got rolling in late December and early January. The area between Shawnee and the Bushkill Access was productive.

During the fall and winter, walleyes can be taken in the deeper, calmer areas of the Delaware. Eddy areas below riffles are good spots. A big 'eye can lie there out of strong current and still be close to a feeding spot.

Most of the fish are caught from boats using drifting tactics. Bait rigs tipped with minnows or 'crawlers take some fish. Jigs dressed with minnows or plastic bodies also work. Some anglers prefer to throw slow-moving crankbaits.

Even though the walleye fishing is prime during the winter months, anglers catch some fish in the spring. The sport provided by the spawning run of the American shad overshadows other forms of Delaware River fishing at that time of year. Last spring, a young angler brought a 32-inch walleye into an East Stroudsburg sport shop. The fish was caught, not surprisingly, on a shad dart.



My 80 BEST

Trout Outings

by Mark A. Nale

After interviewing five expert trout anglers for my article "The Best Trout Fishing Conditions" in the February 1993 *Angler*, I began to think more seriously about what would actually be the best conditions for trout fishing. I found myself agreeing with most of the experts. I wanted a day that was overcast or even rainy. Like four out of five of the experts, I also thought that a stream flowing slightly up and carrying water with a little color produced the best fishing. In the early 1980s, I had analyzed my trout fishing records for water temperature and concluded that 53 to 58 degrees produced the best angling. I believe that these temperatures as well as my other thinking about the "best conditions" were accurate.

Then I remembered a fantastic day I had on low, clear water. A quick look in my stream journal showed another great day on low water, and then I found another! Sunny days can also be good. My records show that I've had a few super sunny days.

As for water temperatures, 53 to 58 degrees still looks good. However, in June 1991, I caught an unbelievable number of trout at 63 degrees, and last year I had an outstanding May morning when the water was only 48 degrees. Was my thinking in a rut? I wasn't sure, but it was clearly time for another serious look at my trout fishing records.

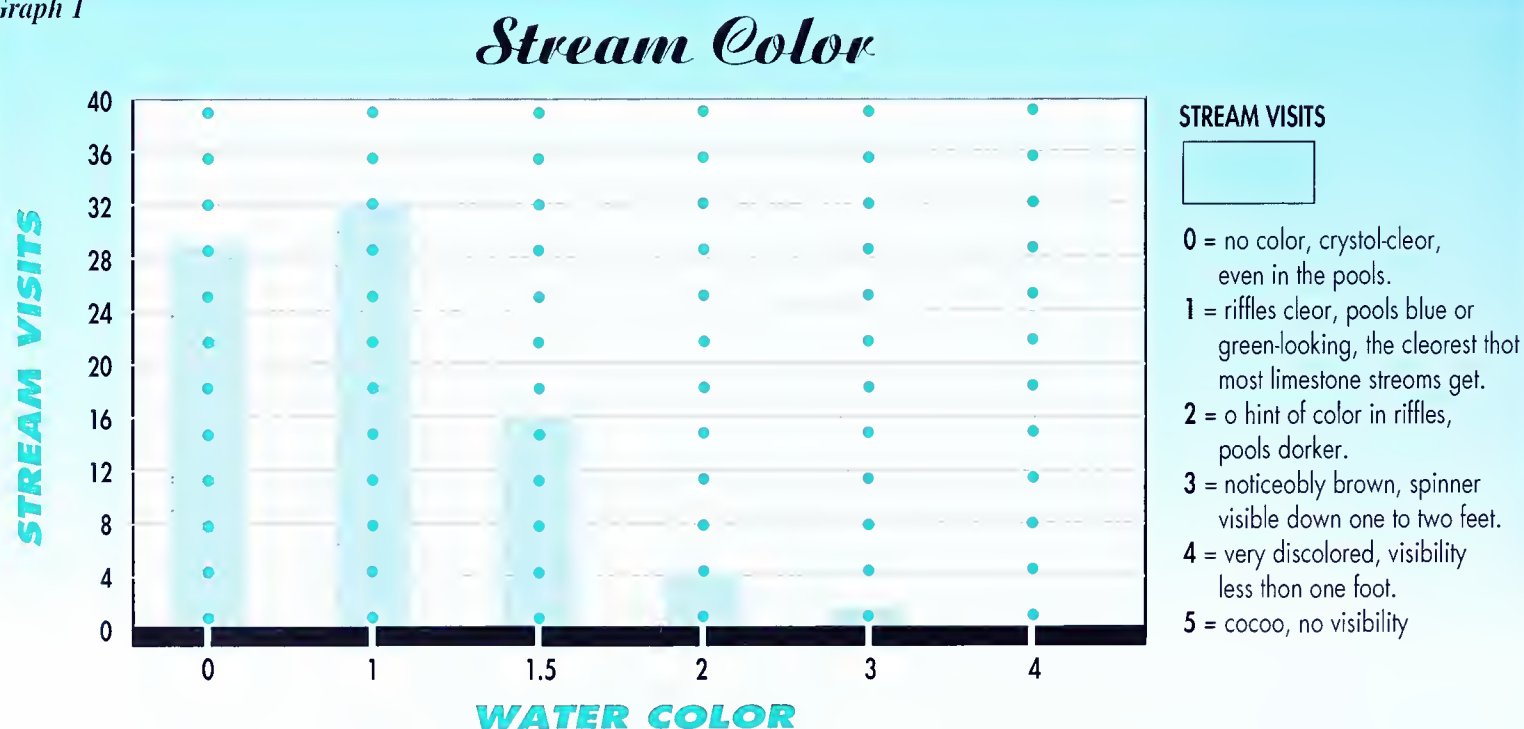
Clarification

Before you read on, it's important to note that these figures reflect Pennsylvania trout (about 65 percent wild browns) caught on spinners and other lures. Some 98 percent were caught on streams open to public fishing. Although I fish for trout 12 months a year, I spend more time on the streams during the summer. I measured each trout caught, and all, with the exception of a dozen or so each year, were carefully released.

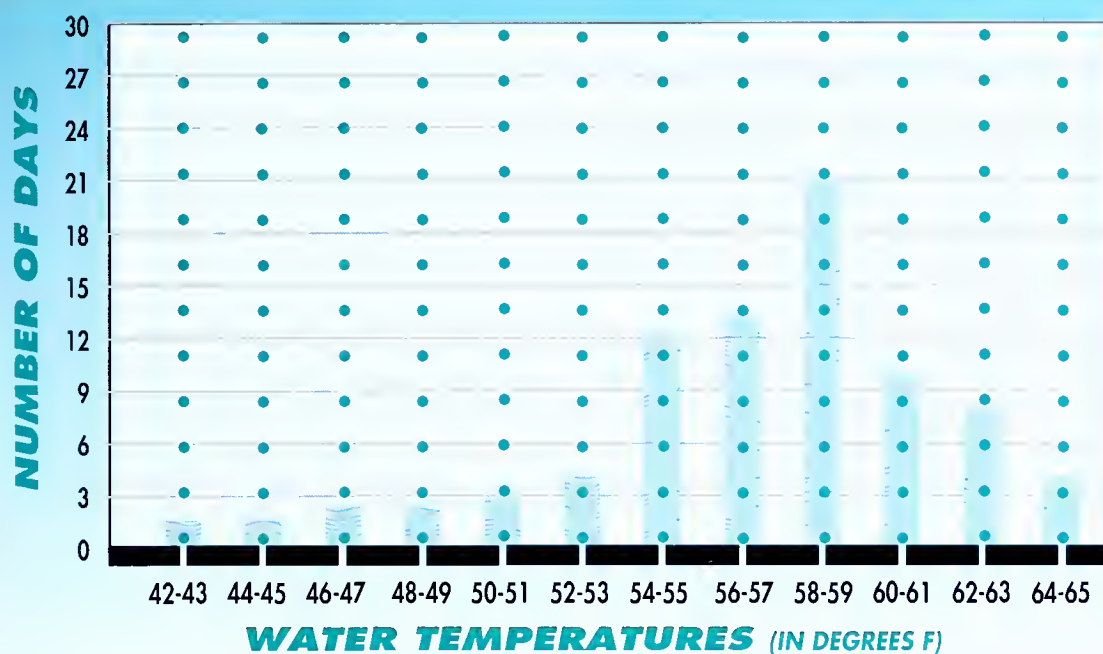
I've met anglers who don't even keep track of how many trout they catch each outing, let alone in a month or in a year. One friend thinks that my "trout per hour" figures are downright funny. These anglers are out to have fun and claim that numbers get in their way. Trout per hour is what I use to compare lure effectiveness, stream quality, water temperatures, as well as my growth as a fisherman.

People close to me know that I have fun catching lots of trout, but I can also have a great outing if I witness a mink catching a crayfish or get to spend an hour photographing cardinal flowers. A trophy trout can turn a slow day into a great one even if it's on the end of my fishing partner's line instead of mine. I also have fun—yes, fun—keeping records and trying to derive some meaning from them. It's only with numbers that we can learn about the "science" of trout fishing.

Graph 1

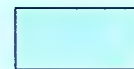


Graph 2



Outings with High Trout/Hour 1983-92

NUMBER OF DAYS



10-year journey

I decided to spend a weekend (that turned into three!) sorting through 10 years of my fishing records (1983 through 1992), looking for my best (highest trout per hour) days. After three weekends, I ended up with 80 outstanding outings. I tallied the water temperature and color, stream level, weather, month and time of day for each. For comparison, I also tabulated the same information for all fishing trips taken during the past three years. What follows is an analysis of that information.

My 80 best outings were spread over eight months of the year (March through October), with most of them (61 percent) occurring during the summer, when I fish the most. Because of my job, the summer months allow me to take advantage of what I think are the better conditions and also to fish during the week when fewer anglers are on the stream.

There was no "pet" water; 23 different streams made the list. Thirty trips took place on 10 of the 23 streams that are limestone. Fifty of my 80 best outings were on the other 13 freestoners. All but three of the waters are small. You don't need to fish large water to catch lots of trout. The streams are located in six different counties, but 18 of the 23 streams are found within a half-hour's drive of my home. Unless I live at the center of the trout fishing universe (some think I do), this reflects nothing more than fishing time on quality streams that I know well.

Stream level

Fifty-four of my 80 best trips were to streams where the water level was above normal for that time of year. That's 67.5 percent. I had recorded "high" 28 times and 26 times I had indicated a flow that was slightly above normal. Only 11 (14 percent) of the top 80 outings occurred on streams with "low" flows. This seemed to be a clear indicator: "Higher is better than lower." For the top 80 it certainly was.

However, when I checked all trips for the past three years, the air was let out of that balloon. Although I had more great days fishing high flows, I also had a good share of poor and mediocre high-water days.

Thus, great fishing can be had at all stream levels. Don't let low or high flows keep you home.

Water color

Each time I fish, I record the water color by using a six-point scale: 0 = no color, crystal-clear, even in the pools; 1 = ripples clear, pools blue or green-looking, the clearest that most limestone streams get; 2 = a hint of color in ripples, pools darker; 3 = noticeably brown, spinner visible down one to two feet; 4 = very discolored, visibility less than one foot; and 5 = cocoa, no visibility.

When tabulating this data for the 80 best trips, I discovered that the majority of my most successful trips occurred on streams that were clear, rated 0 or 1 (see Graph 1). Only one outing was on a stream rated 3, and none of the 80 best occurred on very cloudy water.

Statistically, this means nothing. The majority of Pennsylvania trout streams run clear or nearly clear most of the time. Practically speaking, my data should be an "awakening" to many bait anglers, because their records might show cloudy or slightly cloudy water as best.

Why this difference? Bait anglers typically cast closer to themselves than spinner fishermen and many anglers aren't careful while wading. When streams run clear, trout easily spot these careless anglers.

It is important to remember that trout locate food (including my spinners) primarily by sight. Their vision is best in clear water and they are better able to find their prey—your artificial lure or bait.

Thus, my data distinctly shows that trout, many trout, can be caught in clear water. Don't sit around home waiting for discolored water. Learn to cast farther and stay hidden from the trout so that you can take advantage of clear water rather than giving the trout that advantage.

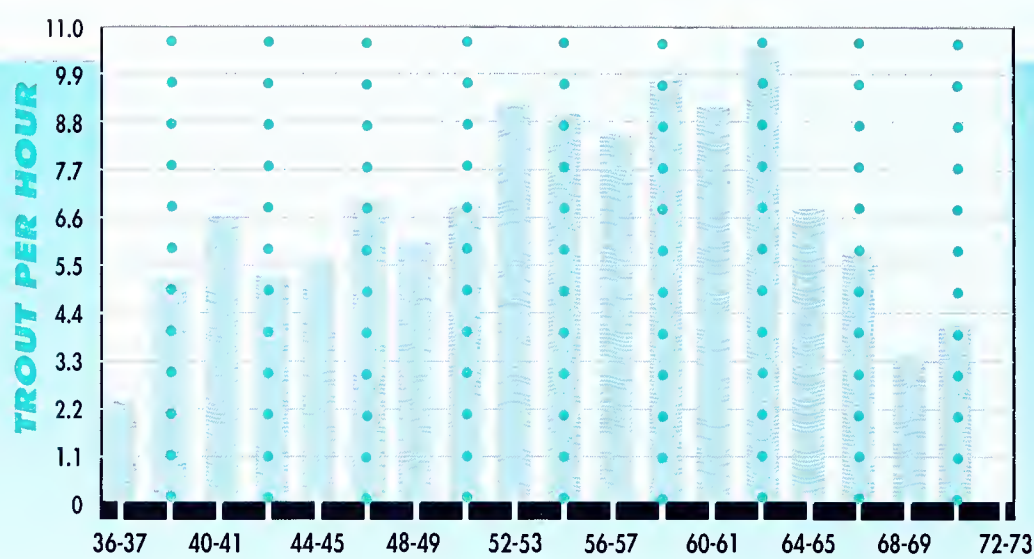
Weather

Fifty-eight percent of my 80 best trips occurred on "dark" days: 15 percent, mostly cloudy; 24 percent, foggy or overcast; 19 percent, rain.

Nearly as many (42 percent) occurred on "bright" days: six percent, hazy sun; four percent, partly sunny; eight percent, mostly sunny; and an amazing (at least to me) 24 percent, full sun.

Thus, great days can be had in any weather if other factors are favorable. My instincts still favor "dark" days, but the data

Graph 3



shows otherwise. The weather, although it might not directly be important, certainly does affect water temperature.

Water temperature

Nowhere does the data paint a clearer picture than with water temperature (see Graph 2). Looking at my 80 best, I found that 79 percent, or 64 out of 81 trips, occurred on streams between 54 and 63 degrees. (One is listed twice because I fished two different streams at different water temperatures in one day.) An entire fourth of these great outings was taken when the water temperature recorded was 58 or 59 degrees.

Does a water temperature of 58 or 59 degrees guarantee success? I wish things were that simple. I've had a few dud outings at these temperatures, too. Nonetheless, when I checked all outings of the past three years, a pattern similar to the one shown in Graph 2 emerged.

Graph 3 plots the average trout per hour for all outings at each given water temperature in two-degree increments. The best temperatures for my spinfishing have clearly been 52 to 63 degrees. That is no small amount of data, either. It represents 221 visits and 3,930 trout caught in that water temperature range during the past three seasons.

Thus, Graph 2 shows that great trout fishing can be had at water temperatures from 42 to 65 degrees, but your best shot at a good day is four or five degrees on either side of 58 degrees. The data in Graph 3 supports the same conclusion. I averaged considerably more trout per hour spinfishing in water temperatures within five degrees of the magical 58 to 59 degree temperature range. If you don't carry and use a stream thermometer, what are you waiting for?

Fishing pressure

Pressure affects my spinfishing in two ways. The first, and most obvious, is the way wild trout are affected by any disturbance. The second way involves the lasting effect that spinners have on trout, both stocked and wild.

On Spruce Creek, Black Creek and others, I've fished upstream a few minutes behind a fly or bait angler. I've caught trout, but very few. Most trout were put down or caught by the other angler and weren't available to me. If the "fisherman" had been a great blue heron, the results would have been the same. To most anglers this is certainly not a new revelation, but read on.

Spinner fishing is very much affected by what happened on a stream two hours earlier, the day before, or to a lesser extent, even a week before. This is spinfishing's greatest draw-

back. If a skilled angler has fished a gold spinner in a stream on Friday, and I visit the same section on Saturday (using a gold spinner), my fishing will be "off" no matter what the conditions. Fortunately, bait and fly anglers don't have this problem.

Here is one example of the effect of re-fishing the same water with the same lure. In May 1990 on a short evening outing, I caught 18 trout from a half-mile section of a small freestone stream. Because the fishing had been great and I had released all of the trout, the following evening I began fishing 150 yards below the spot where I had quit the day before. Even though the conditions were identical, I had not one hit in the same water that gave me super action the previous evening. Fishing was poor and I was about ready to quit, but that was before I reached the new water. It was as if someone had thrown a switch—I got hit after hit on the same spinner that had given me no hits moments earlier. The difference was that the other trout had just seen my spinner 24 hours ago.

Fishing pressure is a very important aspect of trout fishing often overlooked by anglers. Unfortunately, I usually don't know if someone has fished the water with a spinner recently. This variable remains an "unknown" in my fishing equation and probably accounts for some unlikely results. Great conditions can produce poor results if you unknowingly fish an area that has just been fished by another angler.

Best conditions

What are the best conditions? Get out on the stream before the competition and don't be afraid to take a walk to get away from the crowds. My data shows that stream level and water clarity aren't as important as many people think. Anglers do need to learn how to fish different conditions properly.

The weather, with respect to the amount of sunshine, doesn't seem to be that important, either. Trout are more skittish in bright light, but here again, anglers need to learn how to compensate for that.

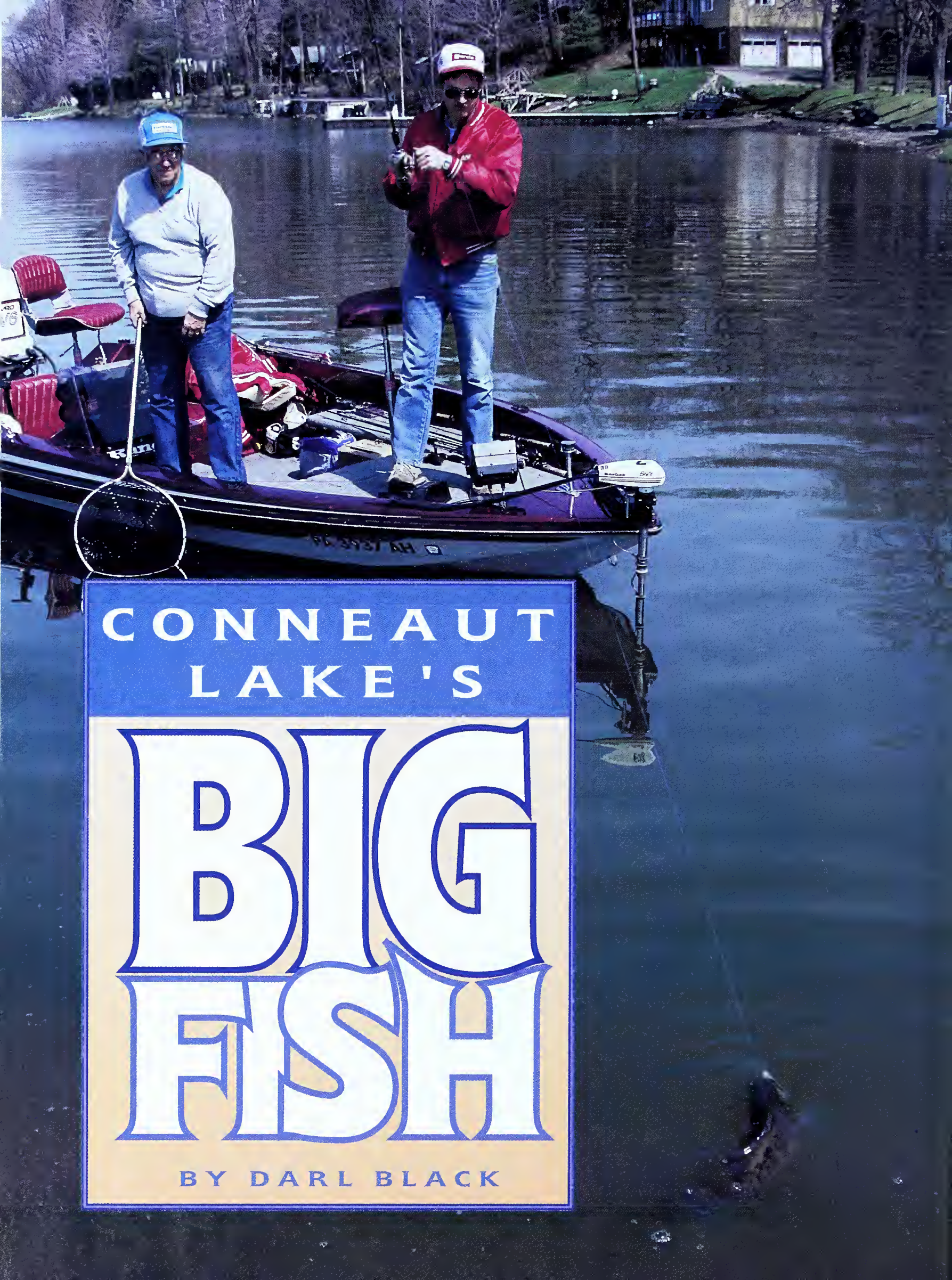
Water temperature is very important. Use a stream thermometer. Keep records of stream temperatures and learn to predict which stream might be flowing in that magical 52-degree to 63-degree range on any given day. My data shows that this would work to anyone's advantage.

Reviewing my data has been an eye-opener for me and it should help put more trout on the end of your line. I'm going to use this information to have a more productive season and I hope it can do the same for you.



If you don't carry and use a stream thermometer, what are you waiting for?





CONNEAUT
LAKE'S

BIG FISH

BY DARL BLACK



You can search long and hard for a lake like Conneaut that provides such a balanced fishery.

The line jumped as if the lure had been hit. I snapped the rod upward and detected considerable weight on the terminal end of the line 35 feet straight down. As I pumped the rod, whatever was on the line shifted left and right as if trying to swim lazily away.

I thought maybe it was a pike or musky, or a really big walleye. Any one of these critters can play 'possum for awhile in deep water, then suddenly spring to life full of fight upon realizing it is being pulled toward the surface.

About halfway up, the resistance suddenly eased. I reeled in my lure, checked the line for abrasion and then examined each hook point.

Just another Conneaut Lake mystery. Perhaps a tease by a trophy fish. But it could have just as easily been a plank of wood from an old sunken boat, a chunk of strange porous rock picked up by lure hooks, or even a bone from a woolly mammoth. All kinds of things happen on a 70,000-year-old lake.

Conneaut connection

At 925 acres, Conneaut Lake in Crawford County is the largest natural lake within Pennsylvania borders. Surrounded by summer homes, motels, condos, marinas and an amusement park, Conneaut is one of the busiest resort lakes in the state. Yet, in spite of all this summer traffic (or perhaps because of it), the lake supports one of the finest warmwater fisheries found anywhere.

My first view of Conneaut was from the boardwalk of the amusement park when I was about eight years old. Fascinated by the lake's clear water, I asked my dad why we never fished the lake. "This lake is for water-skiing and powerboats," he said. "We'll stick to fishing Pymatuning Reservoir and the Shenango River."

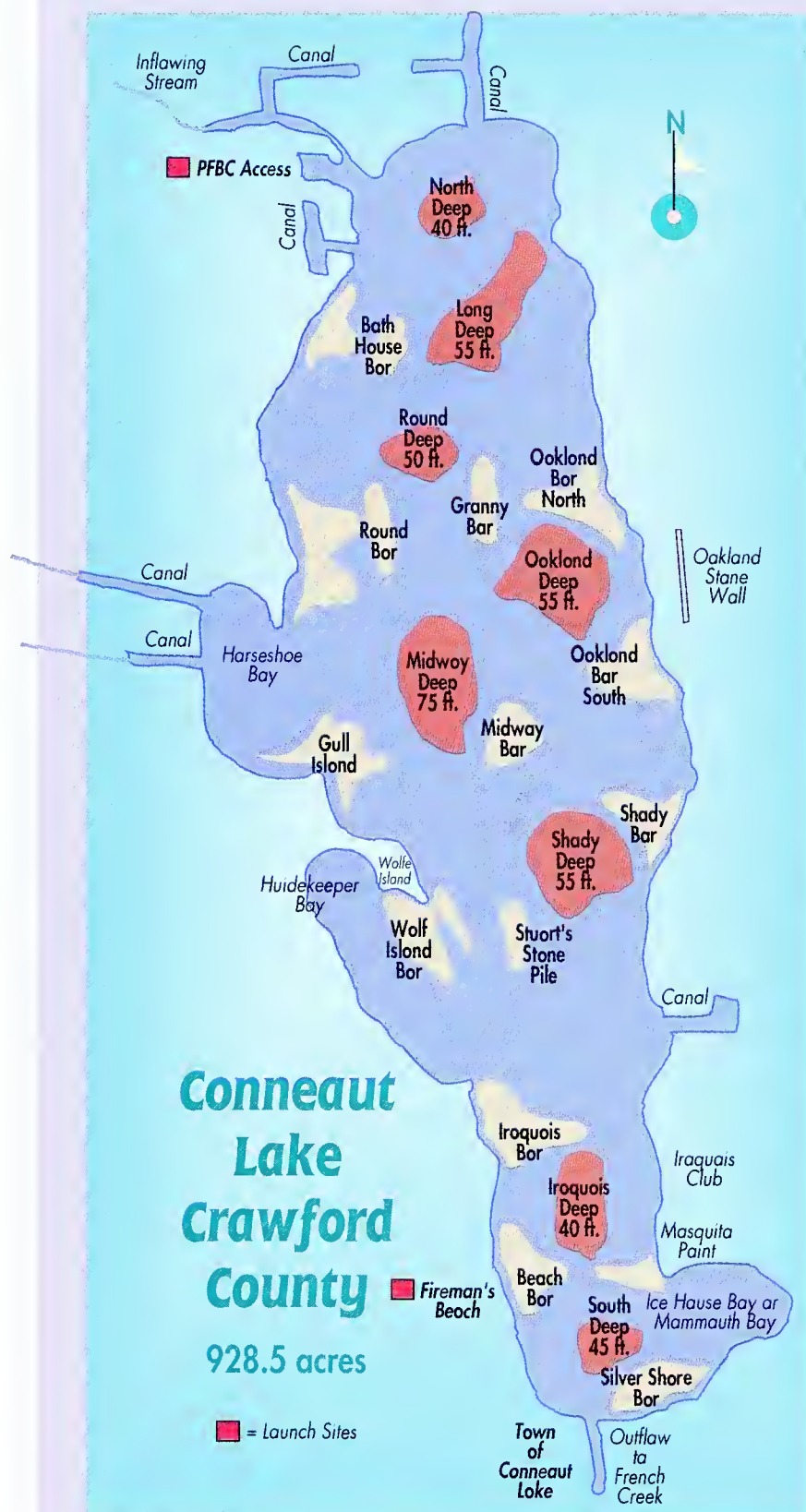
It would be another 18 years before I cast a line into Conneaut Lake. But in a single outing, I realized this was a lake I wanted to spend a lot of time on in the future. Since that day in 1977 I have enjoyed thousands of hours fishing Conneaut for bass, muskies, walleyes, pike, crappies, bluegills, white bass, rock bass and even carp.

And yes, dad, I sometimes have to dodge water-skiers and pleasure boaters. But it's worth it!

Structure, cover

Conneaut Lake's formative years go back to the fourth and final ice sheet, the Wisconsin glaciation. As the glacier retreated northward because of warming temperatures and lack of snowfall, a large block of ice broke off at the site that is now Conneaut Lake. Rock, gravel and debris from the melting glacier carried across on the outwash plain filled the area surrounding the isolated chunk of ice. When the chunk of ice finally melted, a hole known as a kettle was left. It eventually filled with water, creating a lake.





Conneaut Lake is one of Pennsylvania's busiest resort lakes. In spite of all the summer traffic, the lake supports one of the finest warmwater fisheries found anywhere.

"Today's Conneaut Lake is a great all-around fishery," says 25-year lake veteran Dave Hornstein. "It's good for bass, walleyes, muskies, pike and panfish. You'll search long and hard for a lake that provides such a balanced fishery."

Conneaut is a multiple-basin lake with points and ridges separating eight different basin areas at least 35 feet deep. The deepest area is a quarter-acre spot registering 75 feet on modern sonar equipment.

Approximately 25 percent of the lake is less than 15 feet deep. Aquatic vegetation is abundant in the shallows, with milfoil

Conneaut Lake Information

- **How to get there:** From the I-79 interchange at Meadville, drive west for eight miles on Route 322.
- **Regulations:** Standard inland waters fishing regulations and seasons apply. Horsepower is unlimited.
- **Boat launching:** Fish and Boat Commission access on the northwest corner of the lake off Route 618 provides a three-boat ramp and parking for 40 trailers. No overnight mooring is permitted at the access.
- At the southwestern corner of the lake, Fireman's Beach in the borough of Conneaut Lake provides a nice single-boat ramp and parking. A fee is charged to launch and park during the summer season.
- **Services:** There are three marinas at the southern end of the lake, where fuel is available.
- **Lodging:** There are numerous motels and several campgrounds near the lake. Also, state park campgrounds and cabins are near Pymatuning Reservoir, about 10 miles away.
- **For more information contact:** Crawford County Tourist Association, 211 Chestnut St., Meadville, PA 16335; phone 814-333-1258.
- **Caution:** No shoreline public fishing is allowed, except at the Commission access. Also, the lake is very congested every warm weekend during the summer, especially around the Fourth of July.—DB.



and coontail forming large weedbeds. Broadleaf cabbage and eel grass are found in some areas, too. Depending on water clarity and weather each year, the deep weedline is established somewhere between 10 and 14 feet. Beds of spatterdock (yellow pond lily) are on the increase in muck-bottom bays.

Major shoreline-connected points and shallow mid-lake humps are referred to as "bars." There are four large weed-capped humps that are named, and at least a dozen deeper rock/gravel humps and ridges that do not show up on maps.

Starting at the outside edge of the deep weed growth, the bottom

is a rubble mixture of gravel, small rock and marl down to a depth of approximately 35 feet. A transition zone from firm bottom to silt occurs between 40 and 45 feet in most basins.

During the summer, water below the thermocline lacks sufficient oxygen to support fish. In the early summer, the thermocline sets up somewhere between 26 and 34 feet; it breaks down in early fall, allowing oxygenated water into the depths.

In some areas, deposits of fist-size to jug-size rocks can be found. Along the east side of the lake, a kame terrace formed by the glacier created a few underwater cliff-like ledges. At several sites, water depth drops rapidly from the shallows to 40 feet.

Manmade fish habitat enhances the rich, natural cover. Hundreds of docks provide fish-holding cover. During the 1800s, as part of a canal project, a dike was constructed at the south end of the lake to raise the lake level several feet; shoreline trees were inundated. Although the lake has returned to near-normal level, underwater stumps in several bays add even more fish cover. In deeper water, sunken boats (row boats to ferry boats) and old dock pilings now serve as fish attractors.

"Conneaut Lake amazes me for the variety of different species, as well as the impressive size of the fish," says local angler Bob Hornstrom. "Smallmouth and largemouth bass, muskies, walleyes, white bass and the list goes on. For such a small lake, it has more variety of structure than any lake I have fished. Whether you like to fish shallow or deep, weedbeds or rock piles, docks or dropoffs—Conneaut has it all."

Big-fish water

Besides a reputation as a summer resort, Conneaut Lake is known as home to the state record musky. The 54-pound brute was taken in 1924 by Lewis Walker, Sr., of Meadville.

However, the Walker musky has only been recognized as the official state record fish for about 22 years. And it happened only as the result of another giant musky taken from Conneaut Lake.

In September 1970, Jerry Munson of Meadville landed a 56-inch musky weighing 48 pounds. At that time, state record fish were judged by length rather than weight. The Fish and Boat Commission listed a 55-inch musky as the record. Munson immediately had his musky's length and weight certified and sent a notarized letter to the Commission stating he had landed a new record musky.

When the story of a new record musky hit the Meadville paper, Lewis Walker, Jr., president of Talon Industries, claimed his father had caught a larger musky from Conneaut in 1924. The mounted fish was still on display in the Talon building. Walker had the mount measured, and convinced the Commission to recognize his father's 59-inch musky as the state record. That aged mount now graces a wall at the Linesville Fish Culture Station.

Musky fishing interest in Conneaut Lake grew considerably, paralleling the explosion of warmwater fishing throughout the country. For a decade, Conneaut was the destination of musky fishermen from all over the East.

The musky population was fairly strong during the 1970s and early 1980s. Several fish over 50 inches were caught, but none reportedly exceeded Munson's 56-incher or Walker's 59-incher.

Stories of the one that got away have many anglers believing a monster musky exceeding 54 pounds roams the depths. Several fishermen have tangled with fish so big that they do not even like to speculate on the size.

In September a few years back, Dave Hornstein hooked an enormous fish in 35 feet of water on a blade bait while fishing for walleyes. He never budged the fish from the deep water, but it pulled his boat around for 20 minutes before finally straightening the hooks on the lure.

Bob Hornstrom, who has landed muskies in the 40-pound class, had a similar experience. He was fishing a deep weed edge for bass with a powerful 7 1/2-foot flipping stick and 25-pound-test line.

"An enormous fish engulfed my jig-and-pig," says Hornstrom with a slight tremble in his voice. "I could not control it. Instead, it pulled me around like a water-skier, moving the boat about as fast as if the electric motor were on high speed. The line finally frayed and broke. I still lie awake at night wondering just how big that fish was."

While musky hunters continued probing the lake, the new breed of bass anglers was discovering the lake, too. Few waters in Pennsylvania boast a bass fishery offering both large-mouths and smallmouths in the quantity and quality found in Conneaut.

Dave Lehman is one of many friends I introduced to Conneaut's big bass population years ago. One cool, damp, misty September afternoon, we had taken several largemouths up to 4 pounds. Arriving at Oakland Bar, Dave switched from a spinnerbait to a plastic worm. His first cast was rewarded with a 7-pound, 4-ounce largemouth.

Two weeks later, fishing with his daughter, Lehman landed a 5-pound, 13-ounce smallmouth on a spinnerbait. Even though these fish were the largest of both species he had taken up to that time, Lehman returned these bass to the lake after weighing them.

"Conneaut Lake has excellent potential," says Lehman, who still fishes the lake regularly. "Some days it is hard to catch a bass, and other days the bass are all over your lure. It is a great bass water because it does not receive a lot of fishing pressure due to water-skiers. Knowing the growth potential of fish in this lake, I believe it could house a new state record bass."

But which species—largemouth or smallmouth? Perhaps both.

Shortly after I started fishing the lake, a musky guide told me of an enormous largemouth he observed on a spawning bed. He was a former Fish and Boat Commission employee who had spent years working with fish, so his judgment that the bass weighed about 10 pounds was credible.

Further evidence of state record potential was observed when Bob Hornstrom landed an 8-pound spawned-out largemouth one night in June, and returned it to the water. Had this fish been in prime shape during the fall, it may have weighed close to 9 pounds. If still alive today, it would likely weigh over 11 pounds.

Bob Hornstrom also believes that a state record smallmouth is possible from Conneaut. He is certain on two occasions such a fish was on the end of his line. One time I was with him.

It was the last day of September, about seven years ago. The weather was gray overcast with a slight breeze and a steady drizzle—a perfect Conneaut Lake smallmouth day. We were fishing Zara Spooks, using the walk-the-dog technique to imitate a floundering baitfish on the surface. Smallmouths were shallow and active. We had caught and released a dozen smallies between 2 1/2 and 5 pounds.

Arriving at one particular gravel shoal, Bob whispered, "This is where I lost the biggest smallmouth of my fishing career about three weeks ago on a day just like this. I only wish someone had been with me to witness the size of the fish."

He made a long cast and began working the bait feverishly back to the boat. Suddenly a large swirl engulfed the plug. Bob held off setting the hook an extra second until the line tightened, indicating that the fish actually had the plug.

When he hauled back on the rod, a gargantuan bronzeback burst from the water. Unable to clear the surface, it collapsed into the water. I was dumbfounded at its size.

The fish started a beeline in the direction of the boat. Bob reeled like crazy to take up slack. Ten feet from the boat the fish exploded again. Still unable to clear the water completely because of its weight, it appeared to stand on its tail. Then, in slow motion, the bass hung in the air shaking its head until the lure went flying. There was little doubt in my mind. That smallie was pushing 8 pounds.

Want another big smallmouth story from Conneaut? There was a musky fisherman who caught a 26-inch smallmouth while trolling a big musky bait, and filleted it without getting it weighted. The carcass, minus the head, was later measured, and a guesstimate put it over 8 pounds.

Are smallies of that size still in the lake today? Perhaps. During 1992, Jerry Swidzinski of Butler caught two 6-pound-plus smallies on back-to-back September weekends. The larger of the two, a 6-pound, 8-ounce trophy, was taken during a bass tournament. Both fish came on soft-plastic grubs.

Swidzinski, a scuba diver, has personally observed up close Conneaut Lake smallmouth bass far larger than the two he caught.

White bass

Swidzinski's search of several years for trophy Conneaut smallmouths has already netted him one state record fish. In November 1990 while fishing for smallmouth, Jerry landed a 3-pound, 12-ounce white bass. It beat the previous white bass record by 3 ounces, which also came from Conneaut Lake.

There is no doubt that another record white bass is swimming in Conneaut Lake. Several anglers have reported seeing white bass they believe weigh 4 pounds.

White bass travel and feed in schools, and they are very competitive. When you hook a fish near the surface, the entire school follows the hooked fish to the boat.

In the clear water of Conneaut, it is possible to view several fish right beside the hooked fish. By measuring the white bass that was hooked and landed, it is possible to make accurate guesses about the larger fish seen in the school.

Walleyes

Traditionally, Conneaut was regarded as a walleye lake by local anglers. Old-timers tell of the spring walleye run, which migrated up the Conneaut outflow stream from

French Creek. The fish came to spawn on the expansive gravel flats of the lake.

Today, a network of Game Commission waterfowl dams on the outflow stream prevents walleye migration and eutrophication has resulted in silt covering many spawning areas for lake-bound 'eyes. But through periodic stocking by the Fish and Boat Commission, walleyes remain a significant part of the Conneaut Lake fishing scene.

Compared to nearby Pymatuning, the average size of a Conneaut Lake walleye wins hands down. Walleyes from 3 to 5 pounds are not uncommon at Conneaut. A few 8-pounders to 10-pounders are taken each year.

Anglers seek crappies and bluegills on the lake, too. The largest crappie recently reported was a 3-pound, 8-ounce slab. Although not a state record, it clearly shows that Conneaut provides the habitat and forage to produce a record crappie.

Northern pike are also present, although their numbers are down from years ago. Still, a few 10-pound to 15-pound pike are reportedly taken from the lake each year.

Conneaut has the proper balance of shallow-water and deep-water habitat as well as a strong forage base necessary for excellent growth of gamefish. Another contributing factor for Conneaut's big fish, according to some local anglers, is the excessive powerboat traffic, which keeps fishing pressure low during most of the season. They kind of like it that way!

Pennsylvania ANGLER

Conneaut Lake Fishing Patterns

Species	Time	Location/Lure-Technique
Bluegills	spring	inside weedline/jig-and-maggot with float
Bluegills	summer	14 to 18 feet off bars/#8 hook with small leeches
Crappies	ice-out	canals, marinas/jig-and-maggot with float
Crappies	late May	3 to 5 feet sandy loam, stumps/1 1/2-inch tube jig
Crappies	summer	suspended over 20 feet and on deep weedline/ Twister, Beetle Spin, tiny crankbaits
Crappies	late fall	25 to 40 feet on hard bottom humps/minnows, jig-and-minnow, blade bait, jigging spoon
Largemouth bass	June	weedy flats/topwater, soft jerkbait
Largemouth bass	late summer	deep weedline/6- to 8-inch plastic worm, crankbait docks, 4-inch tube jig, lily pads, weedless spoon
Largemouth bass	fall	green weeds/jig-and-pig, spinnerbait, stickbait
Muskies	May and June	'gill spawning colonies/small jerkbait
Muskies	summer	open deep water above thermocline/trolling large plug
Muskies	autumn	deep weedline/bucktail, spinnerbait
Muskies	late fall	near hard bottom humps in 25 to 40 feet/ live bait, jigging spoon
Pike	late May	weedy flats/spinnerbait, jerkbait
Pike	October	deep weedline/jig-and-pig, spinnerbait
Smallmouth bass	summer nights	3 to 15 feet rock and gravel/big blade spinnerbait, jig-and-pig, 6-inch worm
Smallmouth bass	autumn	2 to 10 feet sand, rock, gravel/spinnerbait, topwater, lipless rattle bait
Smallmouth bass	late fall	12 to 25 feet on dropoffs, transitions/4-inch grub, jig-and-minnow, blade bait
Walleyes	early summer	weedlines/crawler-and-spinner
Walleyes	late summer	deep flats/trolling crankbait
Walleyes	September	15 to 25-foot drop-offs/blade bait, jigging spoon
Walleyes	late fall	25 to 40 feet on humps/jig-and-minnow, blade bait, jigging spoon
White bass	summer	8 to 20 feet off bars/surface plug, spinner, jig, stickbait
White bass	October	20 to 35 feet on humps/blade bait, jigging spoon

Headwaters Fly-Fishing SCHOOL

by Mike Bleech



Sometime more than 30 years ago I inherited my first fly rod, actually four or five of them. All were split bamboo with extra tips, and I also got an automatic fly reel loaded with line, and several small tin boxes filled with flies. Learning to fly-fish was relatively simple in those days, without the help of videos and television programs showing me how to cast 30 yards of shooting head line. I took one of the rods to my favorite trout brook, Jones Run, as I recall, and caught a nice mess of native trout.

Fly-fishing has gotten a lot more complicated since then, I am sorry to say. Don't blame it on the yuppies, though, or on highfalutin' outdoor writers. Fly-anglers, some of them, anyway, have always tried to make fly-fishing seem somehow superior and far more difficult than any other kind of fishing. But as vices go, this is not such a bad one, I suspect. After all, though it is really not difficult at all, it is a noble sport, and its ability to sooth the nerves far outweighs some trifling myths fly-anglers might perpetuate.

Bill Haldaman, who lives near Coudersport, is an expert at catching trout on flies in the small freestone headwaters streams fished by most Pennsylvania anglers. My first fishing experience with Bill included a brief lesson in roll casting. From it I learned more about casting than I have since that first day on Jones Run.

Here are some of Bill's heads-up ideas on fishing freestone headwater streams.

You might wonder how headwaters fishing is different from other fly-fishing, and how Bill's methods are different from traditional fly-fishing.

"Headwater stream fishing is narrow and tight fishing," Bill says. "I use a downstream technique to get into places where traditional upstream fishing gets to be difficult. Because of the nature of these headwater streams here in northcentral Pennsylvania, you fish under overhanging branches and brush that is about impossible to cast a fly through."

Bill's methods rely on short, pin-point casts, usually roll casts, mending line, and reading the special nature of headwater freestone streams.

One with the stream

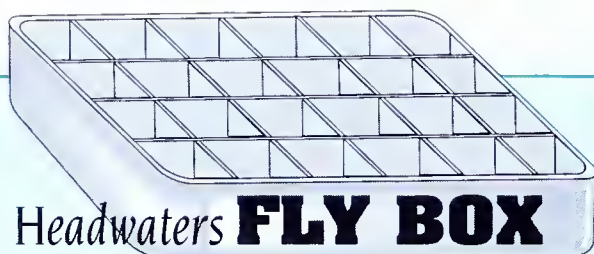
"Reading that stream is the number one thing," Bill teaches.

He likes to call it "becoming one with the stream," studying each pool so you can accurately predict what mood the trout will be in, and where they will be.

"Trout need three things. They need comfort, which is the temperature of the stream. They need food. When we add the third thing, shelter, we have all the things trout need. Comfort, food and protection. That would be a primary lie," Bill says.

Some pools might have two or three primary lies. The biggest trout occupy the primary lies. These places are so perfect that as long as stream flow and temperature allow it to remain a primary lie, trout never have to leave.

Trout are either in a primary lie, or in a secondary lie. A secondary lie has at least two of the three things trout need. It always provides comfort, and it also provides either food or shelter. A secondary lie that provides comfort and food can be termed a feeding lie.



Headwaters **FLY BOX**

Can an angler get by with just flies? Bill makes these suggestions for a basic freestone headwater fly selection.

Start with an attractor pattern nymph, the Hare's Ear, which is a general nymph imitation, in sizes 8 through 20. This is probably the most important fly in the box, because trout feed mostly on nymphs and they feed on them all year.

Bill's favorite streamer is the Zonker, though he usually suggests a dace-nosed minnow to his students. The streamer selection should include sizes 8 through 14.

The basic dry flies are the Adams, which is a generic mayfly imitation, and the Humpy, which imitates caddis flies. Both should be in sizes 12 through 22.

The box is not complete without terrestrials. One of the best is the ant, which can be fished either wet or dry, in sizes 10 through 24.

"If an angler fishes from the last week of May right up to winter, he could probably fish with an ant and catch as many trout as anybody," Bill says.

Choosing a fly begins with "becoming one with the stream." This tells you which type of fly—nymph, streamer, wet, dry, terrestrial—you should use. Then it becomes a matter of finding a fly the trout like. This can be the standard problem of matching the hatch. Size, Bill says, is the most important thing to match—then color and then pattern. Size is usually enough.—*MB*.

The first step in evaluating the stream is to check the water temperature. Bill believes a thermometer is one of the most important tools a fly-fisherman can carry. The temperature tells you how trout behave, and which types of flies you should use.

Trout metabolism slows to the point where they feed very little when the water temperature is below 40 degrees. Then the angler must put the fly so close to the trout that it requires hardly any effort for it to take the fly. Bill suggests nymphs or streamers weighted with splitshot to get the flies down to the trout.

As the water temperature rises above 40 degrees, trout activity increases. Nymphs and streamers are still effective flies, and wet flies, too. But the trout are willing to move farther to take them.

"Once the temperature starts to come up, we start to look for emergent insects," Bill says. "During the emergent stage, fish in the film. You don't want it on the bottom, but you don't want it on the top."

The film, from the surface to a depth of about 3 inches as defined by Bill, is fished with emergent-type flies.

"Trout are most active between 53 degrees and 67 degrees," Bill says. "At the same time, nature has the insects hatching. When the water hits 53 degrees, you probably start to see some duns coming up. The emergent stage now gets to the surface, pops out of the film, and now they have to dry their wings."

While the water temperature is in this range during spring and early summer, this is the time for dry-fly fishing.

The season should be factored in here. By August most of

the good hatches are done for the year. Now it is time to use terrestrials—imitations of grasshoppers, beetles, crickets and ants.

When the water temperature rises above 70 degrees, trout seek cooler water. If your thermometer tells you this, look for trout where springs enter the stream.

After you determine with the thermometer the trout comfort zone, their mood, and the proper type of fly, the next step is to locate cover, such as logs, boulders, depth or overhanging banks. Then determine which current will carry your fly to the primary lie.

Learn to roll cast

Roll casting is an important part of Bill's system because there is seldom room for a back cast in headwaters streams.

Why do anglers have trouble roll casting?

Bill says, "First, they don't want to stop and wait for that rod to load up. Second, they forget to hesitate at eye level before the follow-through."

A proper roll cast, as Bill teaches it, goes like this:

- Load the rod by pulling it back to the 1 o'clock position. The line falls back behind the rod, producing the load.
- Look where you want to cast.
- Snap the rod forward to eye level and then hold it there. The line should roll and straighten out in front of you.
- After the line straightens, it falls. As it begins to fall, follow through with the rod by lowering the rod tip to fishing position, about 8 o'clock.

"At the same time that I am coming down into fishing position, my line is coming underneath my first two fingers on my rod hand. Because at that instant when the line hits the water, nine times out of 10, with native and wild trout, the trout is going to take the fly the instant it hits the water," Bill says. "If you're stuck holding your line in your left hand and your rod in your right hand, you can never set the hook."

Mending downstream

Bill explains why mending is so important:

"I fish current. I fish lies. Because cover limits casting, I cast to a spot and use the current to get the fly where I think the trout is. I use the current to take the fly naturally to the trout."

Mending, manipulating the line to get a drag-free drift, takes on a new dimension with Bill's downstream presentation. Rather than an eventually futile attempt to fight the current, which is always the case with cross-current or upstream fishing, downstream mending puts the current to work, completing the presentation of the fly.

Line control and rod tip control allow anglers to fish the entire stream. The key to line control during the drift is the rod tip. The tip of the rod places the line in the correct current, and flips off the tip lay loops of line on the water. As these loops drift with the current, they pull more line through the guides. They act as a spring between the rod tip and the fly, coiling and straightening to eliminate drag on the fly, until you want it.

These three things—becoming one with the stream, roll-casting and downstream mending—are the keys to Bill's downstream fishing methods for fly-fishing freestone headwater streams. Mastering them without an instructor takes somewhat longer, but just knowing what to do can make you a better angler.

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More Headwaters **FISHING TIPS**

- The better dry-fly fishing occurs during May, June and July. Then it tapers off and you are into terrestrial fishing.
- Most trout feeding throughout the year is sub-surface. You can fish nymphs anytime. The good anglers are good nymphers.
- Often there is an open "fairway" over the center of the stream where you can use the standard overhand cast and back cast.
- Water depth is often the most important form of cover in small headwaters streams.
- From mid- to late summer when trout feed heavily on terrestrials, overhanging banks, or overhanging grass, can indicate primary lies.
- When you fish unfamiliar streams, stop at a local fly shop to learn which flies imitate the current hatches.
- Hatches can be reliably predicted within seven to 10 days from year to year.
- Trout are opportunists—they eat what's available when they're hungry. Presentation is the most important thing.
- Once the hatch is out there, it becomes a lot easier to catch fish by matching the hatch.
- A good rule of thumb: Dark fly colors early in the season, April and May, and as the season progresses, the colors lighten.
- The water temperature may drop 10 degrees at night, so fish nymphs early in the morning, even during early summer. Hatches do not occur until the water warms a few degrees with the sunlight.—MB.



A Matched **OUTFIT**

The rod is critical to roll casting. Bill likes a rod with a stiff back and a quick tip.

"What I call our trout rods are 4-, 5-, and 6-weight rods between 6 1/2 feet and 8 feet long," Bill said. "I'd stay with a name brand rod. Those are the people that invest in research and development."

Bill objects to the notion that the main job of a fly-fishing reel is merely to store line.

"If you are fishing for 10-inch trout, the reel doesn't really mean anything," Bill says. "But you might get an opportunity to catch one of the biggest fish of your lifetime. You may have the opportunity to get into a 6-, 7-, or 8-pound fish. And they're here. We certainly have them in Pennsylvania."

The major problem with playing big fish with a cheap reel is the drag. Cheap reels generally do not have good drag systems.

As soon as you hook a big fish, you should get the line out of your hands, and play the fish off the reel.

"When you play big fish off the line," Bill says, "the next thing you know you are tangled in brush, or you're standing on your line, and you lose the fish."

The line should match the rod according to the manufacturer's rating. Bill suggests weight-forward floating lines for this fishing.

Leaders depend on the fishing situation. Bill uses short leaders when he uses streamers weighted with splitshot, 4 feet to 6 feet long with a 3X or 4X tippet. For nymph fishing, even if he might expect to try a dry fly sometime during the day, he likes 7 1/2-foot leaders with a 4X or 5X tippet. When he fishes strictly dry flies, he uses a 9-foot leader with a 5X to 7X tippet. When the water is low and clear, as it often is during summer when he uses terrestrials, he may drop down to an 8X tippet.—MB.

the MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

by
Jeff Muhllem

Things have gotten so darned complicated. When I was a kid, a wet-behind-the-ear angling fanatic who thought he knew a lot about fly fishing, I never used any patterns below the surface but a Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear and a Zug Bug. And I caught a lot of trout.

I can't remember who recommended those two old standbys, but it was good advice. The Hare's Ear seemed to work well anywhere, particularly in limestone streams such as Spring Creek in Centre County. And the Zug Bug—or Lead-Winged Coachman or anything else with a peacock herl body, for that matter—was especially deadly on the brook trout in the mountain streams of central Pennsylvania, where I grew up.

No matter what was hatching or the time of year, when I wanted to fish beneath the surface, that's all I used. Period. Back then I never anguished about which fly to select, never had to pick through a box stuffed with a baffling array of nymphs, never fooled around at the fly tying vice attempting to blend fur and synthetics to get just the right shade to imitate a particular bug's abdomen.

Oh, for the good old days.

Well, actually, the good old days are here again for me. I'm back to using just a handful of nymph patterns and I still catch a few trout. But in between now and when I didn't know much about fly fishing (some might say I still don't) was a period that lasted decades when I tried about every nymph pattern that had been invented. At one time or another, they all caught trout—and failed to catch trout.

What they did mostly, however, was confuse me. And apparently I'm not the only one. I have a close friend who works in a high-brow fly fishing shop and he says the most common question he hears is, "Which nymph patterns work best?"

If you have been around this sport a while, you know there is no right answer to that question. But if you fish in Pennsylvania, I think you can carry a few patterns that prepare you for most nymph-fishing situations. My suggestions are not based on magic, rocket science or voodoo—just what has worked best for me over the years.



Montana

When you know there are stone flies in a stream, a Montana is a good selection. If you are not sure, ask the locals. There are more realistic stone fly imitators to human eyes—such as the Kaufman's Stone—but a Montana has always worked best for me.



Zug Bug

I mentioned how the Zug Bug works in mountain streams already, but it is also the best fly I have found for use in streams where the large populations of *Isonychia* mayflies live. When the *Isonychia* nymphs get active in May and June in streams such as Penns Creek in Union County, the Zugger is the pattern to use.



Pheasant Tail

I have done a lot of fishing in those storied streams in Pennsylvania's northcentral region early in the season. On April mornings when we expect blue quills, quill Gordons or Hendricksons to hatch from streams such as Kettle Creek, a Pheasant Tail nymph is an automatic. It must look a little like the nymphal form of all those bugs because it usually works.



Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear

Any time, any place trout live, a Hare's Ear can catch them. It looks like nothing—and everything. Perhaps the best thing about this pattern, and about fur nymphs in general, is that the more beat up they get (from trout teeth), the more appealing to fish they seem to become.



Caddis Larva

Many anglers probably don't even consider this fly to be a nymph. But I fish it like one. In streams like Huntingdon County's Little Juniata River, where the hardy caddis is king (probably because decades of pollution were harder on the mayflies), carrying a caddis larva fly is a must. You can also fish it effectively on a long line downstream, twitching it occasionally like a wet fly. It's often a killer on big streams such as Pine Creek. Carry at least green and brown patterns.



Glo Bug

This one is definitely not a nymph, and if you are a purist, disregard this paragraph. But if you want to catch trout in the early spring especially, use Glo Bugs in pink, yellow and orange. Put a drop or two of attractant on your Glo Bugs every now and then. You'll double your strikes. I believe trout think these things are eggs.

Tellico

I don't have any idea what trout think Tellicos are, but I have caught a lot of fish on them. They seem to work in most streams at one time or another. The yellow body might remind trout of a little yellow stone fly or a scud. I know of at least one talented nymph fisherman who regards this pattern as his secret weapon.

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Fishing Nymphs

Many fishermen never quite seem to develop the knack for catching trout on nymphs. For years I used them only when nothing was hatching, and I'm convinced most of the fish I caught were accidents. To this day I watch individuals who are really good at nymphing and wonder how they do it.

They seem to have a sixth sense that tells them what is happening near the bottom where the nymph is. Often, after they have caught a fish, if you ask them how they knew to set the hook, they can't tell you. It's instinct that comes from practice and keen observation. And it may have something to do with extraordinary eyesight. But there are a few things you can try that can help you catch more fish.

And even if you don't develop that uncanny ability to know just when a trout has sucked in your fly—I still don't have it and I suspect I never will—you can become skilled enough to catch fish regularly and feel good about it. You may not get so good at it that you'll want to fish nymphs all the time, but you can become proficient enough that you won't feel helpless when nothing is hatching that you can see.

Here are a few practical ideas.

Strike indicators

I fooled around with foam stick-ons, yarn and brightly painted cork indicators for years before I discovered the Holy Grail of nymphing. I never felt confident fishing with nymphs until a friend showed me how to use inch-long sections of fluorescent fly line as indicators.

All of a sudden I could catch lots of trout on nymphs. Now I tie 7 1/2-foot leaders with three indicators built in, held in place by the leader knots. You can buy the fly line pieces at most good fly shops.

Pick the right water

If you aren't a skilled nymph fisherman, make it easy on yourself. Stay away from those waist-deep to chest-deep runs with heavy current where you can't seem to keep your fly on the bottom, no matter how much weight you use. Stick to pocket water and shallow riffles, about knee-deep to thigh-deep. You will be able to detect strikes and catch fish.

Weight

If you tie your own flies, weight your nymphs with lead wire. When I was learning, I read a bunch of nonsense about how weighted flies don't act realistically in the currents. Now I know the most important thing in nymphing is putting your fly near the bottom where trout are used to seeing the naturals. Often, you need weighted flies and several BB-sized splitshot to do the trick.

If you use removable splitshot, you can experiment with weight. Get your flies down! Don't be afraid to lose a few to snags. If you don't hang up occasionally, you aren't fishing deep enough.

Fish two flies

Use a weighted nymph at the point and an unweighted pattern on a short dropper up about 15 inches. Add a splitshot or two between the flies, depending on the current. Using two flies gives you a chance to catch more fish, because all trout in a stream aren't feeding on the same kind of bugs at the same time.

Patterns, sizes

You need to develop some confidence in a few patterns. Unlike dry-fly fishing, where you can see what trout are eating, when nymphing, you are operating on faith that your fly is a good imitation of fish food. After you catch a few trout, you start to believe, and that faith is what leads to success.

If you carry the patterns mentioned in the accompanying story, that's a good first step, because they fool Pennsylvania trout. Tie them or buy them in sizes 12, 14 and 16 and experiment. Sometimes a small nymph takes trout when a larger fly doesn't, but usually the bigger ones work.

Fish straight upstream

The easiest way to catch fish on nymphs is to wade into a position directly downstream from a fish's lie and cast above it. This lets the fly sink without drag, caused by the current pulling on the line. You need to achieve a natural drift. If you cast straight upstream, you can most easily detect the often subtle leader movements that signal a trout has taken your fly. Keep your casts as short as possible. If you have to do much more than flip your leader and a few feet of line, you are not close enough.—JM.

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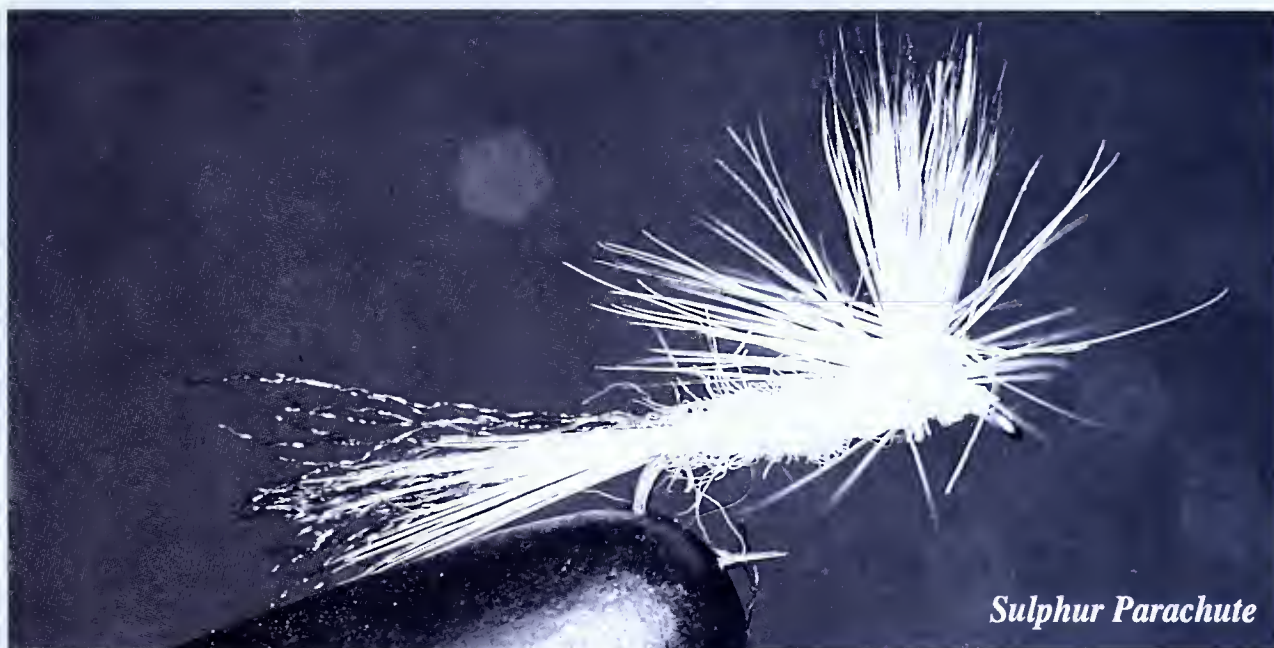
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SEEING DOUBLE

by Charles R. Meck



Green Drake



Sulphur Parachute

What a terrible day to plan a fly fishing trip! As Ken and Kathy Rictor, Bryan Meck and I prepared to head for a day of late-May matching the hatch, we added extra layers of clothing. The weather reminded me of a day one might hit on the opening week of the trout season—not one in the last week in May. I had promised all three anglers that we'd hit some explosive hatches this time of year—but with this cold, dreary weather all bets were off.

We entered the Little Juniata River shortly after noon just above Barree and tried to decide which pattern to select. Then it happened! First, a few huge green drakes fluttered on the water in a desperate attempt to escape from the surface. Within a half-hour, hundreds of duns—on the surface and in the air—appeared in and above the pool in front of us.

By the time the four of us began casting Green Drake patterns toward rising trout, a second smaller mayfly appeared on the surface. Anglers call this smaller insect a tiny blue-winged olive (*Acentrella carolina*). To match this insect you have to use a size 22 imitation. Few trout fed on this second supply of food.

But wait! Just a few minutes later a size 16 pale-yellow mayfly also appeared on the surface. Anglers match this latter hatch with a Sulphur imitation.

That's three hatches occurring at the same time. But wait! There's more. Within minutes, a respectable hatch of slate drakes and little blue-winged olive duns (*Baetis tricaudatus*) added to the parade of mayflies now floating past the four of us.

photos: Charles R. Meck

By 1:30 p.m. on the Little Juniata River that late May, we had more than two dozen trout rising within casting distance of us and five separate decent hatches appearing. Which hatch should we match?

20 different patterns

If you count the nymph, emerger and dun for each of the five insects that appeared that late May day, that's a choice of 15 different patterns trout could be taking. Add trout taking duns with trailing nymphal shucks still attached and you now have 20 potential patterns.

What do you do when you're confronted with several hatches appearing at one time? Copy the most prolific hatch? Imitate the largest insect? Most fly fishers would do what we attempted first—match the largest fly you see on the surface, the green drake dun. Why not? Any trout could quickly satisfy its appetite with just a few of these large duns. Trout feeding on the smaller sulphur or on one of the tiny blue duns would take much longer to get the same amount of food. Right? But trout don't think that way.

For more than an hour the four of us attempted to cast size 10 Green Drakes into a brisk north wind. Not one of those two dozen trout even looked at the pattern. The more trout rose, the more frustrated we became.

I noticed that several trout in front of me keyed in on the smaller sulphur. I took time out and watched some of the duns in front of me. For every trout that took an escaping green drake dun, five fed on sulphurs. I also noticed that the more the green drake quivered as it escaped from its nymphal shuck, the more trout took this larger morsel.

After watching the procession of mayflies in front of me for what seemed like a half-hour, I switched from the Green Drake pattern to a Sulphur. I then took time out to search the surface for trout feeding on the sulphur natural. When I spotted one I'd cast a few feet in front of it and wait. Within minutes I picked up several trout on the Sulphur imitation—for a frustrating hour of fishing before I had caught none on the Green Drake pattern.

Steven Osborne of Tyrone fished nearby and he also noticed this phenomenon. He also changed from the larger Green Drake to a Sulphur. I suggested to Ken Rictor, who fished some 100 feet below me, to change to the smaller yellow pattern. Almost immediately Ken began catching holdover brown trout on the Sulphur.

Bryan Meck stayed with the Green Drake pattern. He scanned the surface in front of him for trout feeding on this larger dun. When he spotted one and cast above it, he usually got a strike.

The multiple hatch continued for most of the afternoon. Ken Rictor and I stayed with Sulphur patterns and caught trout. Bryan Meck stayed with the larger Green Drake and he, too, caught trout. We all caught trout on different patterns because we looked for trout feeding on the natural that our pattern copied.

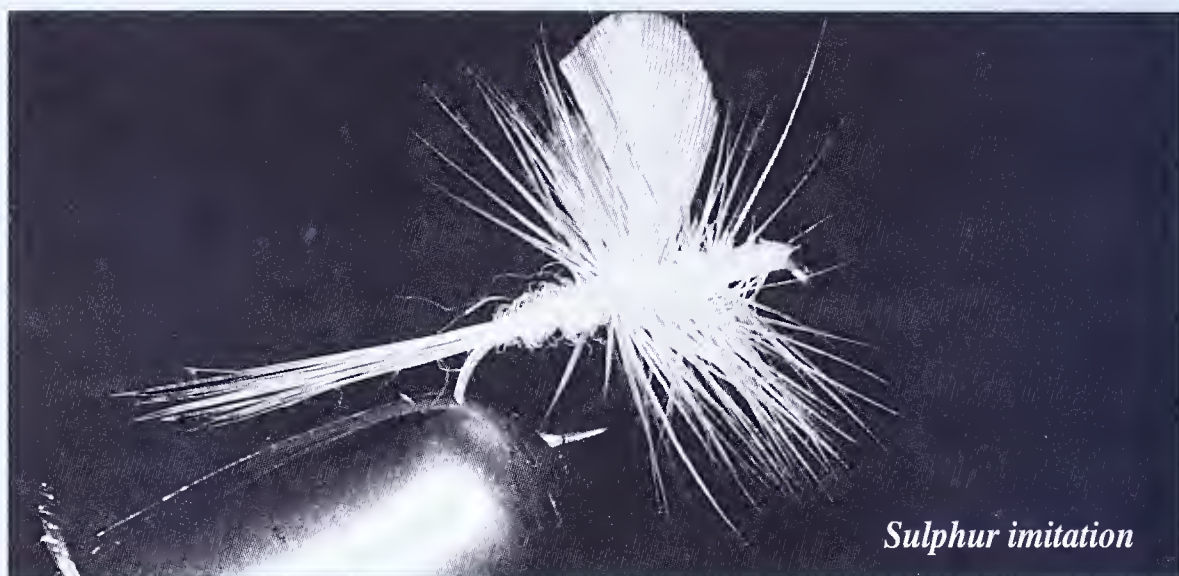
By 7:00 p.m., only a few green drakes remained on the surface—all other hatches had ended. I spotted several heavy trout

feeding on the few green drake naturals too cold to take flight. I switched to my Green Drake pattern and cast along a deep rock ledge at the far shore. A huge ring and a trout had sucked in the pattern. Within minutes I had landed a 17-inch brown on that drake pattern. Now even the drake hatch ended and the surface became still.

That momentous day with five separate heavy hatches could have turned into one of those frustrating, less rewarding days if we had not taken time during the heat of these hatches to observe how and on what the trout were feeding.

You might think that the previous story about seeing all the hatches would be unusual on Commonwealth streams and rivers. Not so! I've witnessed multiple hatches or spinner falls on many of our great waters.

Another river that consistently holds several hatches in late May is the Delaware River. Bob Sentiwany of Lehigh Tan-



Sulphur imitation

nery and I fished a section of the river just across from Hancock, New York, several years ago. That late May evening we hit fishable hatches of gray foxes, pink cahills, and black caddises.

When there's no hatch on the Delaware, you can experience an extremely frustrating trip. Add a hatch or two to this productive water, and match that hatch, and you can sample a really successful day. Several times during that evening we had to switch from one pattern to another to catch feeding trout.

Hotspots

But other than the Little Juniata and Delaware rivers, are there other good trout waters in the state that hold multiple hatches? I've seen four mayflies appear in ample numbers on Big Fishing Creek in Clinton County in mid- to late April. On that same high-quality central Pennsylvania stream in late May I've seen sulphurs, green drakes, slate drakes, and pink cahills compete for the angler's attention.

I've also seen blue quills and quill gordons appear at the same time on little Stony Fork Creek just south of Wellsboro. Hit the delayed-harvest section of the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning around the end of May and you'll see a veritable smorgasbord of hatches like the brown, green and slate drakes, sulphurs and more. Hit Yellow Creek 30 miles south of Altoona near the end of May and you'll see green drakes and sulphurs and more emerging at the same time.

Pick any of several dozen productive streams throughout the state and you're likely to see two or three hatches, especially in mid- to late May. In the sidebar on page 29 I've listed more

than 20 of these streams that hold more than one hatch in late May. Add streams that hold multiple hatches in mid-April and later in the season, and the number goes above 50.

Rules

Witnessing more than one hatch can be a very common occurrence in the state, especially around the end of May. What are some of the rules you should follow if you hit those days when you see more than one hatch on a stream?

- First, and this goes for any time I fly fish, before you begin fishing take time to see what's happening. Look around and see if there are any trout feeding. If you see trout rise for food, try to learn what they're taking.
- When we see trout rising, too often most of us begin fishing to them immediately. If we take a few minutes to see what's happening, we might determine what trout are feeding on.
- If you see trout surface-feeding, are they taking duns on the surface or are they taking emergers just under the surface? Look at the rise forms. Are they splashy? If so, maybe trout are feeding on caddis flies or mayfly emergers.
- Do you see more than one insect on the surface? See if you can find out which one most of the trout are taking. Or do as I did in the previous story and fish to those trout taking the insect you're copying. By taking just a few minutes during a frenzied feeding episode, you can make the difference between success or failure.
- Don't get too attached to the pattern you're using—if it doesn't work, try another. Larger is not always better. Remember, if more than one insect appears on the surface, trout often take the smaller one. As with the earlier story, trout often prefer the smaller sulphur natural over the much larger green drake. Fly fishers often learn this baffling truth after years of fishing the drake hatch.
- Multiple hatches can often include at least one spinner or caddis fly. I've experienced evenings on Penns Creek where four or five different spent spinners attracted the trout's attention. I've witnessed countless evenings when to be successful you had to match four or five different falls in the span of a half-hour.
- The more you know about mayflies, the better you'll be prepared to fish spinner falls. Often around the end of May you see sulphurs, green drakes, gray foxes and a dozen other common mayflies. Many of the spinners or egg-laying adults of these mayflies lay their eggs on the surface near dusk. If you're aware of the hatches that appear on a particular stream, you'll be prepared to fish spinner falls. In late May when you're on a stream, look skyward just before dusk and you'll probably see thousands of spinners heading for a riffle to lay their eggs.

When to go

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned that we hit a multiple hatch in late May. Late May and early June are probably the best time to hit these multiple hatches. But you can experience the frustration or success from these hatches from early April through October. On Big Fishing Creek in mid- and late April I've seen four and five hatches on the water at one time. On the trophy trout section of this fertile stream, I've noted blue quills, quill Gordons, hendricksons, and little blue-winged olives create multiple-hatch days. Add to the four mayflies an ample supply of grannom caddis flies and you might be in for another frustrating matching-the-hatch day.

I've hit other days on Pine Creek near Cedar Run when that once-great water produced multiple hatches. Fish that great

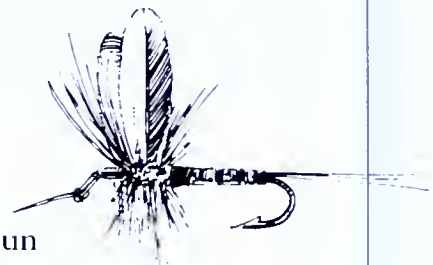
water in late May and you might see brown drakes, gray foxes, slate drakes, blue-winged olives, light cahills and green drakes competing for the trout's attention. On many evenings when I came to this scenic stream to fish the brown drake, I ended up using a Slate Drake or Light Cahill pattern to catch trout and save a non-productive trip.

The next time you're on a productive Pennsylvania stream and you see double—or even triple—will you have determined what's happening? Take a few minutes before you begin to determine which insect and what phase of that insect most of the trout are taking. By studying the water before you start, you can often turn an apparently frustrating experience into a rewarding one.

ANGLER

Multiple Hatches in May

1. Sulphur
2. Green drake
3. Brown drake
4. Slate drake
5. Blue-winged olive dun
6. Light cahill
7. Little blue-winged olive dun
8. Tiny blue-winged olive dun
9. Gray fox
10. March brown
11. Pink cahill



Streams with Multiple Hatches in May

1. Little Juniata River
2. Yellow Creek
3. Canoe Creek
4. Big Fishing Creek
5. Penns Creek
6. First Fork of the Sinnemahoning
7. Oswayo Creek
8. Oil Creek
9. Delaware River
10. Lehigh River
11. Yellow Breeches
12. Pine Creek (Potter County)
13. Cove Creek
14. Brodhead Creek
15. Kettle Creek
16. Driftwood Branch of the Sinnemahoning
17. Cross Fork Creek
18. Bald Eagle Creek (Tyrone)
19. Spruce Creek
20. White Deer Creek
21. Wills Creek
22. Brush Creek—CRM.



Adopt-a-Stream commended

On August 6, 1992, Karl Lutz, Adopt-a-Stream Area Coordinator, and his assistant, Brian Stitzer, began supervising and constructing a fish habitat improvement device known as a "mud sill" at the Whitehall Parkway, on Coplay Creek. Lutz designed and implemented the plans for the Whitehall Parkway. His efforts and the efforts of his team were in largely the reason for this area receiving the first place award in the "Take Pride in Pennsylvania" campaign. Last December, Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, gave Lutz an Executive Commendation for his efforts to protect the natural resources of the Whitehall Parkway.

photo-Todd Loomis



Karl Lutz (left) and Brian Stitzer (right)



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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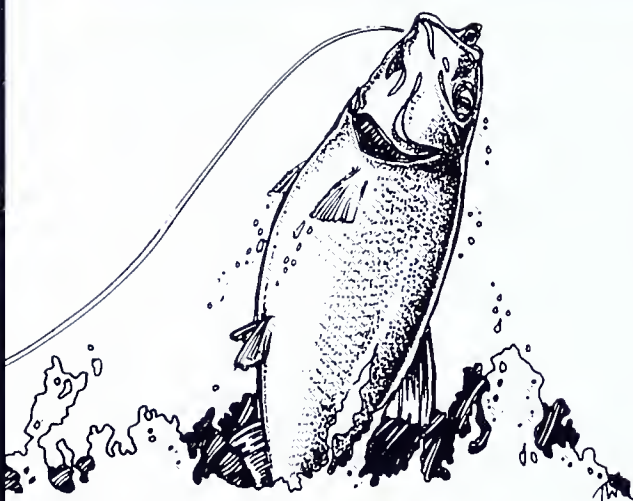
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Angler's Notebook by Sam Everett



Fish fact: The American shad is distributed along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America. Males, or "bucks," caught on hook and line average about 19 to 22 inches long. Females, or "roes," average 22 to 24 inches long.

Bivisible flies float well, even in fast water and in riffles, and they account for many trout. Try them in brown, gray, black, white and ginger. Like an Adams, a bivisible doesn't represent a specific fly.

Water falling over rocks in a pool can point the way to productive fishing. Trout and other gamefish congregate below these areas because the tumbling water is aerated and carries plenty of oxygen to the fish.

The sulphur is one of Pennsylvania's most common mayflies. Sulphurs appear during a two-week to four-week period about mid-May to mid-June. They usually hatch around dusk, but on cloudy, drizzly, cool days, the action could commence during the day.

Use this easy way to check your boat trailer hubs. Prop up each wheel, one at a time. Spin the wheel by hand and listen closely. Do you hear grinding sounds? Does the wheel labor to turn? If the wheel makes noise and doesn't turn easily, you need to replace some of the hub's internal parts, or at least repack the hubs with grease. Inspect the inside of the hubs or let your dealer do the job.

Crappie fishing picks up in May in many waterways because the fish gather in shallow water to spawn. Locating crappies is a key to success. To find them, fish small minnows at different depths until you locate a school. Then switch to crappie jigs. Be prepared with both live bait and artificials because crappies can refuse one offering in favor of the other.

For better shad action, arm yourself with darts in a variety of color combinations. Change your dart every half-hour or so until you find the combination that scores.

Walleyes like slow-moving, wobbling, deep-running crankbaits. Work these lures in deep holes with rocky and gravelly bottoms.

Successful crankbait fishermen expect to lose a few lures now and then to snags, bottom obstructions, logs and brush piles. Don't worry about losing a few lures this way—you have to work crankbaits close to obstructions because that's where you'll find gamefish.

Fish have refined, highly developed olfactory senses. You can use this fact by applying scent and attractants to your lures. Attractants encourage fish to identify your offering quickly as food, and they encourage fish to strike.

illustration- Ted Walke

On the Water

ON THE WATER

with Dave Wolf

Pushing It to the Limit

If there were only one month of the year when I would be allowed to fish, it would be May. As a lover of the long rod, May is the time of year that some of the most important hatches come off the water. It is also the month when winter finally leaves entirely and spring is upon us. Waters recede and begin to clear and trout come willingly to a fly bounced on the currents of a fresh river. Admittedly, some of the better hatches occur during other months, but May is the month when fly-fishermen are at their best. The time when other methods of fishing become less productive and when fishing with flies means that you will be the top-ranked trout catcher on most days.

Of all the trout anglers among us, fly-fishermen are without a doubt the most cliquish. There are circles of fly-fishermen, inner circles and even a deeply rooted core that presides over the trout, bass, muskies or whatever fish you seek. All have experts at the head table, and if you attend trout fishing-related functions you will find one.

Take the time to talk to a fly-angler and you will soon discover that once engaged in conversation, the expert's eyes will glaze over and they'll soon be casting in their mind to some unseen trout on an unseen river. Then an opinion of trout management will soon follow, and of course, the latest fly pattern produced to capture this magnificent creature that has outwitted everyone else. If this does not frighten you off, you may find that the expert has taken your hand and you, too, will be casting an imaginary rod across a crowded room. The crowd will be blotted out by the image of a river and casting to the exact spot so that your fly finds its way to that gigantic trout lying beneath an overhanging alder. By the time your body begins to tremble, the expert will excuse himself to move about the room and exchange views with others. You may need shock treatment or therapy to recover, or you may, as many have, run out and drain the family's bank account to become part of the circle.

Now, you may fly-fish without becoming part of a circle. But if you become a follower and join organizations associated with the sport, you will soon find yourself amidst a hardcore group that admits to carrying fishing to the limit.

No, I am not poking fun at fly-fishermen, for I, too, am an addict. If anything, this is a reality check. I will not tell you how many fly rods, reels and fly lines I own—I have lost count—nor will I tell you of the great amount of fly tying material I own. You see, I have rationalized that only I can tie certain patterns the way I want them, and it is cheaper to tie my own than purchase them. True, but I need to get tying to make up

the deficit between the large quantity of material I own and my sparsely filled boxes of flies.

Fly-fishermen continue to delve into the mysteries of the trout and other species they seek—some have gone as far as putting scuba gear on to study their behavior and daytime holding waters. Most have conducted unscientific studies of the creatures they seek and all have captured aquatic life to closely inspect and copy it. Many new patterns have evolved or at least altered

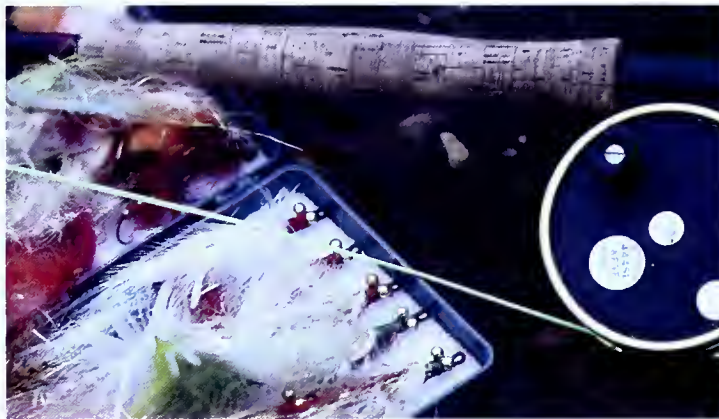
old ones, and fly-fishermen have removed themselves from the need to use all natural materials and to rummage through craft shops to create flies out of material that granny used for afghans. The truth is that few flies are made out of all-natural materials. You're more likely to find foam, a hunk of carpet, or leather attached to a hook these days than the hackle of a natural blue dun.

If fly-fishermen are to be brought under the scrutiny of a fly-tying lamp, the golden factor of the fraternity is that they will not tolerate trout water degraded or lost. They concern themselves with the welfare of the environment and the habitat of the trout more than most, and many I have known have lost sleep and even shed tears over waters lost. They preach conservation everywhere they go—to the masses and among themselves during late-night chats over the latest leader material. They are concerned over public access and the general masses, and for the most part have come to recognize other forms of fishing as having a rightful place along trout waters.

If they seem a bit snobbish at times, forgive them. If they behave as if trout were the most important thing on this planet, try to understand. For them, clean streams and trout take precedence over almost everything. If you do not understand why wet flies have now become emergers and why nymphs are now the ultimate in fishing, replacing the dry fly that was, at one time, the only way to fish, be patient.

If you don't want to cast to unseen rivers and tricky currents, do not mention trout in their presence—you see, they cannot help that they have carried trout fishing to the limit. The glazed look as they pass you on their way to their favorite fishing spot is not meant to be snobbish. Many could walk over you and not know it, because they see only trout and they have a pocket full of patterns they must try—and the day is slipping by and there may be no tomorrows.

Most do not want to fish any other way. Those who do would need to be rehabilitated in a long and painful process that most do not want to endure. But realize that most who have been this far have the heart and soul of a conservationist within them, and that will be their greatest contribution to fishing.



Pennsylvania
ANGLER

Many Trout, Few Anglers

by Tom Greene



The following waterways provide worthwhile angling throughout May and June. After the season opens,

these waterways hold ample numbers of stocked trout but have little fishing pressure.

Allegheny County

Bull Creek
Deer Creek

Bedford County

Yellow Creek

Bedford/Blair Counties

Bobs Creek

Berks County

Antietam Creek
Manatawny Creek
Scotts Run Lake

Berks/Lebanon Counties

Tulpehocken Creek

Bucks County

Perkiomen Creek,
East Branch

Cameron County

George B. Stevenson
Reservoir

Chester County

Brandywine Creek,
East Branch and
West Branch
Pocopson Creek

Clinton County

Kettle Creek Lake

Columbia County

Fishing Creek

Crawford County

Conneaut Creek

**Crawford/Warren
Counties**

Pine Creek

Cumberland County

Childrens Lake
Yellow Breeches Creek

Dauphin County

Clarks Creek

**Dauphin/Lebanon
Counties**

Stony Creek

Fayette County

Dunbar Creek
Youghiogheny River

Forest County

Tionesta Creek

Franklin County

Conococheague Creek,
West Branch

Huntingdon County

Standing Stone Creek

Jefferson County

Redbank Creek, North Fork

Lackawanna County

Lackawanna River

**Lackawanna/Luzerne
Counties**

Lehigh River

Lancaster County

Octoraro Creek, West
Branch

Lebanon County

Quittapahilla Creek

Lycoming County

Little Pine Lake
Lycoming Creek

**Lycoming/Tioga
Counties**

Pine Creek

Mercer County

Cool Spring Creek
Shenango River

Monroe County

Brodhead Creek

Potter County

Lyman Lake
Sinnemahoning Creek,
First Fork

Somerset County

Piney Creek

Sullivan County

Loyalsock Creek

Susquehanna County

Starrucca Creek

Tioga County

Beechwood Lake

Warren County

Brokenstraw Creek, Little

Wayne County

Dyberry Creek, East Branch

York County

Bald Eagle Creek

Tom Greene is the Coldwater Unit leader in the Commission's Division of Fisheries Management. Special thanks goes to the Commission area fisheries managers, WCOs and the Division of Law Enforcement regional managers and assistant supervisors for contributing this information.

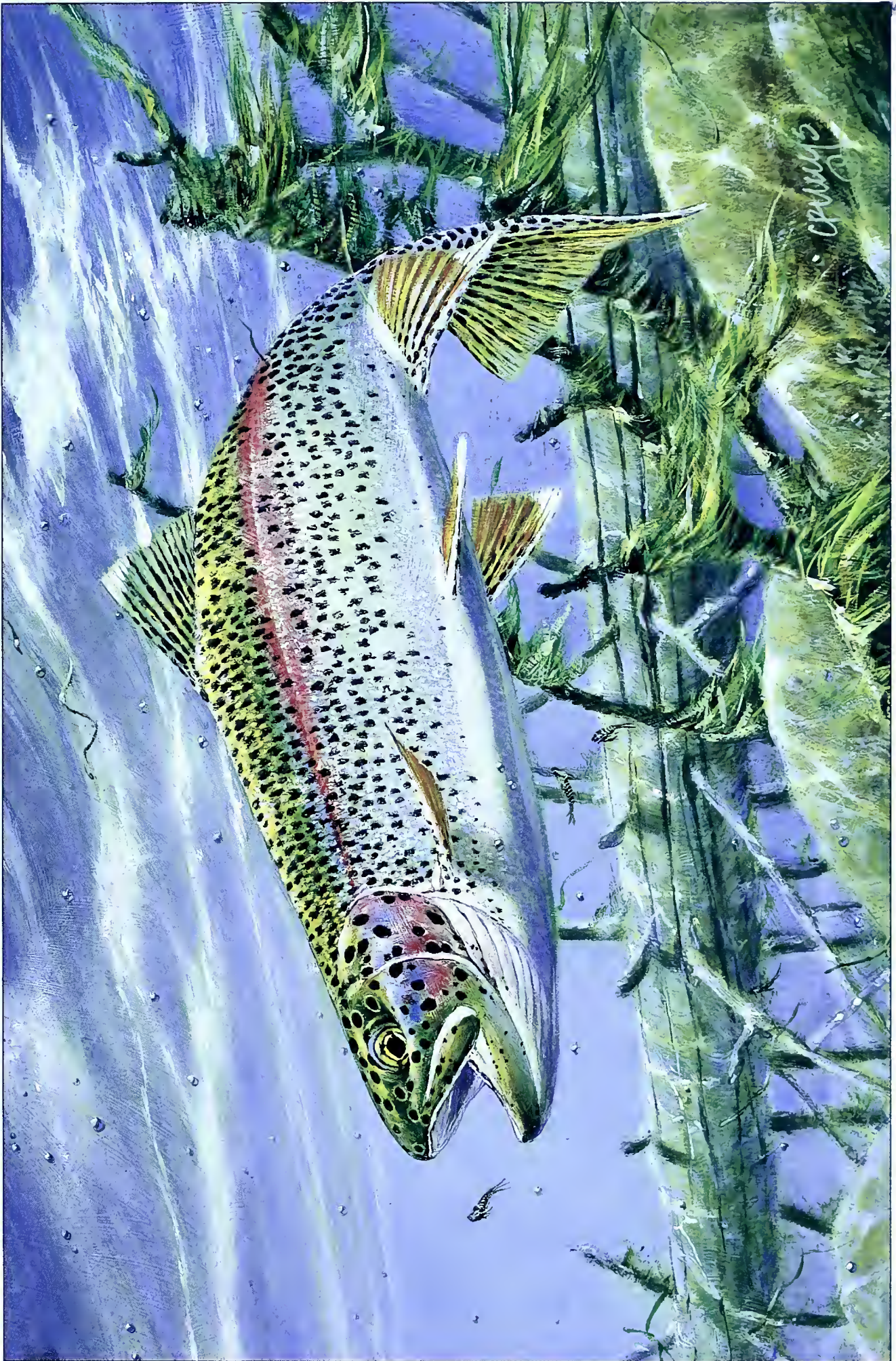
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Pennsylvania 1993 Trout/Salmon Stamp

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Straight Talk

Wear Your PFD in '93



Edward R. Miller, P.E.
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

The Commission has made great progress with its safe-boating educational efforts in recent years. At a time when the number of boaters is increasing rapidly (an increase of 46,000 registered boats in the last five years), the Commission has been able to limit fatal accidents caused by careless and irresponsible boating behavior.

An analysis of boating accidents over the past five-year period (1988 through 1992) reveals that only five of the 88 boaters who lost their lives had taken any formal boating safety instruction. This is a strong indication that safe boating instruction has been a major factor in saving lives on the water.

As spring weather approaches, anglers and boaters increase their water-related activities. Too often, however, they forget that warm weather and sunny skies do not ensure warm waters, and the many dangers surrounding cold-water boating are overlooked. The month with the most fatalities during the five-year study period was May, with 21 fatalities (24 percent of the total). Only 38 percent of the accidents occurred during the heavy boating months of June, July and August. This means that 62 percent of the boating deaths occurred in spring and fall months when water temperatures are colder than the weather leads many to believe. In fact, 46 of the 88 fatalities (52 percent) were caused by the effects of hypothermia resulting from immersion in cold water. Remember, "cold water can kill."

Another major factor in boating accidents and deaths is alcohol. Thirty-four fatalities (39 percent) involved improper use of alcohol. Too often boaters assume that accidents only happen to others and disregard common sense. All boaters need to fix in their minds that alcohol and boating do not mix.

Often, citizens assume that most boating accidents and fatalities occur among fast powerboats and collisions with other boats or fixed objects. In fact, just the opposite is true. Only four fatalities (4.5 percent) resulted from collisions between vessels, and powered boats were involved in only 39 fatalities (44 percent). The most revealing statistic, however, is that 49 fatalities (56 percent) occurred in non-powered boats, with canoes (22 fatalities) and rowboats (15 fatalities) the most dangerous craft.

This grim statistic illustrates the vital importance of involving non-powered boaters in safe-boating instruction efforts, and the need for stepping up educational efforts. Too often, it is suggested that only powerboat operators need extra training, but it is apparent that a method must be found for involving this user group in safe-boating educational efforts.

There is, however, a major lifesaving tool available to all boaters, if only they can learn to use personal flotation devices (PFDs). Many victims of fatal boating accidents during the past five years could have survived if they had been wearing an approved lifejacket or vest. Twenty fatalities occurred in boats that did not even have PFDs on board, and 51 fatalities resulted from boating accidents where PFDs were on board but not worn by the victims. Predictably, only 14 fatalities occurred when PFDs were worn by the victims, and most of these were caused by the victim being pinned underwater or caught in the deadly currents below low-head dams.

Remember, as you prepare for the 1993 recreational season, that cold water is a potential killer and alcohol and boating do not mix. Most importantly, however, always have all your passengers wear PFDs when on the water. The life you save may be your own, or those of your closest family or friends. Do not take chances with such precious cargo.

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April 1993 Vol. 62 No. 4

Night Marauders of Lake Erie by Darl Black

For years anglers have been wading into the cold Lake Erie shoreline waters for nighttime walleye action. Check out their success secrets.....4

Western Pennsylvania's Big-River Crappies by Jeff Knapp

The Monongahela and lower Allegheny rivers offer springtime sport for slab-sized crappies. Knowing how and where to score is the key.....8

An Olive Spinner by Chauncy K. Lively

For some fine trout action, tie this productive Blue-Winged Olive pattern and give it a whirl during an evening's hatch.....12

Family Fun at Pennsylvania Farm Ponds by Bruce Ingram

Fishing, farm ponds and families go together naturally. Be sure to capitalize on this opportunity this season.....14

Getting the Edge by Tom Fegely

Finding a waterway's edges and knowing how to fish them can help you increase your catches.....16

Low & Slow for Early Season Trout by Mike Bleech

Trout hug the bottom early in the season. If you want to score, your baits and lures have to get down and stay down.....20

Fishing the Emerger by Dave Wonderlich

Fishing for trout that are taking emerging insects can be productive—if you know how to present a fly and which emerger patterns work best.....23

On the Water with Dave Wolf

Will the young follow?.....31



The cover

This issue's front cover shows the 1993 Pennsylvania Trout/Salmon Stamp, available now at Fish and Boat Commission offices and at more than 1,500 license issuing agents and county treasurers' offices. The back-cover brown trout, caught and released in a northcentral Pennsylvania stream, was photographed by Barry & Cathy Beck. Opening day is the 17th—are you ready? On page 20 brush up on the baitfishing and lure fishing details that can help you score, and if you prefer to fish flies this time of year, check out page 23. All anglers this season can increase their catches armed with the information on page 16, and if you'd like action other than trout this month, please turn to page 8 for the details on early season crappie fishing, and page 4 for inside information on Lake Erie's April shoreline walleye fishing. Want another kind of trout fishing experience than stocked trout? Would you like to begin your trout fishing season before opening day? Please scan this issue's back cover. No matter how you like to begin your season, good luck! And don't forget to send us a clear snapshot of your best catch for publication consideration in the "Currents" section.



Night Marauders of Lake Erie

by Darl Black

Colorful hues evolve, merge and fade in the sky as if they were controlled by a master artist with a computer paint brush. Desiring each moment to linger, you search for a hold button, but none can be found. The progression of the color spectrum continues unabated.

As the last sliver of sun slips below the horizon, twilight arrives—the eerie period between sundown and full darkness when one's senses can be confused because of lingering afterglow, which turns everything into shadowy images. It signals change-over time, when sun lovers move to shelter and night creatures prepare to emerge.

Enthralled by an Erie sunset, I almost forget the reason for being here. A handful of individuals stretches in a single line for about 100 yards down the shore. Armed with long sticks they anxiously await an attack from night marauders.

Not anything sinister, mind you. The sticks are actually fishing rods, and the objects of this night excursion are walleyes—critters commonly sought by anglers on Lake Erie. However, this spring night setting is far different from the locations where summer anglers encounter them. Rather than seeking walleyes with a boat over deepwater sanctuaries, we stand knee-deep in water only a few yards off the beach.

Welcome to nighttime walleye fishing

Although some anglers have been following the Erie walleye night bite for years, this beachfront fishery remains a mystery to most anglers. The reason is simple—successful individuals wanted to keep it a secret.

But it's hard to keep the lid on something as exciting as seven- to 12-pound walleyes taken from shore. Gradually, as more anglers become involved, word leaked out.

Still, there are local anglers who resent the proliferation of information on "their" fishery and do not welcome additional anglers. This was clearly exhibited to me three years ago. I was told by a friend that walleyes were biting along a particular section of beach.

That evening I met him well before dark, and we made our way to the site where he had caught several big fish the night before. Already a group of anglers milled about the beach. My appearance, with a camera bag over one shoulder and a tripod over the other, touched off a heated exchange between my host and one of the anglers. At one point I thought fists were about to fly.

In part, the concern focused on the misconception that I was from the local newspaper and would divulge the next day in the paper that walleyes were hitting along this stretch of beach. The irate angler accepted my presence when convinced that I was not from the local paper and that I would not mention this specific site in this magazine article.

The angler had been placated, so it did not seem necessary to remind this guy that fish in Commonwealth waters do not belong to any individual or to any special group of anglers. Standing on land open to the public, anyone who so desires could fish for these walleyes as long as fishing regulations established by the Fish and Boat Commission were obeyed.

However, there is another reason why some local anglers are reluctant to advertise Erie's spring walleye windfall, far different from a selfish "my fish" attitude. Many who have followed the shoreline walleye fishery for years voice concern about overharvest of spawning fish.

Ed Concilla, one of Erie's best-known walleye anglers, worries

The key to this shallow-water walleye activity is water temperature. The 40-degree mark initiates the start of the walleye spawn. Without large tributary rivers or mid-lake shoals, Pennsylvania walleyes are limited to spawning along the main lake shoreline.

over the increasing pressure on spring walleyes. "Many fish taken in the early spring are full of eggs. I realize the year-round season on Erie permits harvest of six fish daily, but I always emphasize the need to return to the lake any females loaded with eggs. Keep a few males or spawned-out females if you wish, but put the ripe females back. If we don't take care of this prized fishery, it will not last."

Concilla voices a legitimate concern, and a forceful argument for not hauling out a stringer full of big fish. So enjoy the fishing, but limit your harvest.

Getting the lay of the beach

"The key to this shallow-water walleye activity is water temperature," says John Scypinski, an Erie resident who has been working the night bite since the 1970s. "Peak fishing starts when water temperature hits 47 degrees. You can't put an exact date on it because the lake warms at different rates each year."

According to Scypinski, the fishing is always better after several days of calm weather so that the lake has a chance to clear up. Rough, dirty water is not productive, even if the temperature is right.

Ed Concilla, however, says it is possible to catch 'eyes as soon as the shoreline water temperature rises above 40 degrees. "With water in the 41- to 42-degree range, a few fish can be taken while casting from the beach. However, many of these early fish are loaded with eggs."

The 40-degree mark initiates the start of the walleye spawn. Without large tributary rivers or mid-lake shoals, Pennsylvania walleyes are limited to spawning along the main lake shoreline.

Fish and Boat Commission biologist Roger Kenyon describes the process. "Walleyes are instinctively drawn to moving water when the spawning urge hits. In this instance, the fish apparently seek the surge of wave motion on the beach. Under the cover of darkness, walleyes move as shallow as three or four feet on calm nights to pair up with a fish of the opposite sex. However, I suspect the actual fertilization of eggs takes place in a little deeper water. If the females drop their eggs too shallow, the eggs are in peril when the next storm moves in with heavy wave action."

By the time the water temperature reaches the upper 40s, spawning activities are over for another year.

It may be debated whether walleyes directly involved in spawning are willing to feed, but there are always a few pre-

The fish are not vigorously chasing bait. It's slow fishing. If an angler gets a dozen strikes a night, it has been an exceptionally good evening. The night bite begins around mid-April and lasts through early June.

spawn and immediate post-spawn fish around looking to fill their bellies.

Concilla agrees that the peak shallow-water bite does not take place until the fish have completed spawning activities. "Fish in the 42-degrec water do not feed often and the feeding periods are brief. When walleyes have completed the spawn, they start feeding regularly. However, this isn't like the feeding frenzy you might encounter in the fall."

The fish are not vigorously chasing bait. It's slow fishing. If an angler gets a dozen strikes a night, it has been an exceptionally good evening. The night bite begins around mid-April and lasts through early June. By mid-June most walleyes have abandoned the shallows.

Can walleyes be found anywhere along Pennsylvania's 40 miles of Erie shoreline? Probably, but the odds of picking up random fish are low. Concentrations of fish must be sought.

Experienced lakeshore anglers know that two conditions must be met to make the site a fishing hotspot. First, there must be inflowing water that is warmer than the main lake.

"That inflowing water may be anything from a stream the size of Elk Creek to a small drainage ditch," says Concilla. "Any significant amount of warmer water coming into the lake is worth investigating."

The second prerequisite for locating feeding walleye is, of course, baitfish. Actually, the presence of bait depends directly on the warmer water entering the lake. The warm water pulls the bait, and the bait attracts the walleyes.

Traditionally, emerald shiners have been the draw. However, shiner movements can be inconsistent from night to night. But the Fish and Boat Commission inadvertently added stability to this spring walleye bite when it started the salmon program.

Both Concilla and Scypinski concur. The stocking of salmon and steelhead smolts have concentrated large numbers of walleyes at specific sites along the shoreline for longer periods.

During the winter and early spring, fingerling steelhead and salmon are stocked in the small tributaries to be imprinted before migrating to the main lake. When stream temperature gets a bit too warm (usually mid-May), the smolts move in large schools downstream and out to the lake, right into the mouths of waiting walleyes.

Although salmon stocking started two decades ago, years passed before walleyes became conditioned to this new forage source. At sizes ranging from six to eight inches, the smolts have become a favorite forage for big walleyes in a post-spawn feeding binge.

"It has become very apparent to anglers who have been at this a long time that walleyes are keying on smolts in recent

years," explains Scypinski. "When I first started night fishing in the late 1970s, if I got three hits, it was a very good night. Today the fishing is five times better."

Connecting with a walleye

What do you use to catch a springtime walleye at night? Ask the advice of any successful angler on the beach and the answer is always the same. The number one lure for these night-bite walleyes is a slender shallow-running minnow plug.

Depending on your circle of anglers, these lures may be referred to as stickbaits, jerkbaits or twitch baits. The most popular ones on Eric's beaches include the Rapala Original Floating Minnow, Rebel Minnow, Bomber Long A, Storm Thunderstick, and a Bagley Bang-O-Lure.

What about using the normally effective jig or jig-and-minnow for these walleyes? "No good," claims Concilla. He says these walleyes are cruising high, often with the dorsal fin sticking out of the water. They are looking for minnow forage right on the surface where the warmest water is found. He contends that the walleyes won't see a lure bouncing on the bottom.

Within this big group of plugs, each model behaves in a slightly different fashion. Anglers often point to a variance in the action—a tight wiggle versus a wide wobble—for the reason why some fishermen are more successful than others on any given night. It may seem like nitpicking, unless you are the unsuccessful angler apparently throwing the wrong bait. Therefore, be sure to have several minnow-bait models with different actions.

Scypinski generally favors the plastic models over balsa because plastic lures are heavier and thus easier to cast long distances. Concilla prefers a jointed Rapala because it creates more water disturbance than a straight plug.

But more important than the exact plug is the speed of retrieve. Sound advice: Start out turning the reel handle as slowly as you can. Then reduce the speed of your retrieve by half.

"If you are fishing when the water temperature is in the low 40s, you want that plug barely moving—it's more like a creeping retrieve," explains Concilla. "As the water warms in the following weeks, you can increase the speed of the retrieve a little. But the key word is still *slow*."

If you're unfamiliar with working a minnow bait this slowly, practice your retrieve in daylight until you can judge the speed at which to turn the reel handle. Generally, the plug should move slowly enough just to ripple the surface.

Individual anglers tend to stay with a certain color plug that produced for them in the past. Thus, it becomes difficult to say whether a particular color pattern is actually generating the strikes, or fish are caught with it because almost everyone is throwing it.

For Scypinski, the most productive colors have been either black back/silver side or something with chartreuse in the pattern. But he admits that walleyes are caught on just about every color.

If he's limited to one color, Concilla picks rainbow trout. "When those smolts move into the lake from the streams, a guy would be crazy not to 'match the hatch.'" According to Concilla, other good nighttime colors for spring are silver/black, chrome/black, gold/black, and chartreuse.

Medium-power spinning tackle with six- to eight-pound test is best. To assist in making the desired long casts, rod length should be 6 1/2 to 7 1/2 feet.

"Although you see some anglers throwing minnow baits on long steelhead rods, I do not believe this makes a good out-

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Safety and Courtesy

Common sense dictates that you never fish alone at night, a time when help may not be readily available. Always team up with a buddy for a safer trip and leave word with someone exactly where you are planning to fish.

Lake Erie is a navigable waterway, so the shoreline is legally open to the public from the water's edge to the high water mark. However, that does not entitle you to cross private property to get to the beach area. Access the shoreline at a public park or boat ramp, or obtain permission from the property owner. Secure your permission ahead of time, not late in the evening when arriving to fish.

Dress for the cold, even in early June. Spring nighttime temperatures along the lakeshore can drop into the 40s or 30s. Dampness makes the air temperature seem even colder. Dress in insulating layers, and don't forget a hat and gloves.

If you intend to wade (a definite advantage), chest waders are safer than hip boots. In addition to letting you wade a few additional yards out into the lake, chest waders can be secured near the top with a belt to prevent water from entering if you stumble.

For cold water, nothing beats neoprene waders. Although a few bucks more than rubber or canvas waders, the added warmth of neoprene makes it worth every cent you invest in them.

To keep other anglers from yelling obscenities in your direction, do not shine a light about. A bright light falling on the surface spooks the already skittish shallow-water walleyes. Carry a small flashlight for changing lures or unhooking fish. Always point the light toward the shore when using it.

And lest we forget, Ed Concilla reminds everyone to wear a PFD when wading. "A guy can drown in three feet of water simply by slipping on a rock. Be safe, not sorry."—DB.



fit," says Scypinski. "The tip of a steelhead rod is too soft for a good hookset with a plug and the rod is too limber to control a walleye when standing waist-deep trying to land it. The rod should have some backbone to set hooks and a medium/light tip to control big walleyes."

Night walleyes rarely smack a plug. It's common for walleyes to swim up to the plug, take the bait and continue swimming in the same direction as your retrieve. Sometimes the "strike" goes undetected until you look down at two glowing eyes about seven feet away when you are ready to lift the plug for another cast.

The best advice is to react with a sweeping hookset to any irregularity in the retrieve, whether it's a slight bump or a feeling that the plug is fouled.

If walleyes smack the lure hard and run with it, this may well indicate the presence of a large school of active, competitive walleyes. Hold onto your rod!

Some anglers believe it is possible to catch walleyes any night the lake is calm. Others want a slight ripple or little cloud cover. Concilla says the best nights are a full moon and no cloud cover.

"Maybe the baitfish are more active on the full moon, maybe the walleyes are more active, maybe the fish see the lure better—I don't know," Concilla says. "But the feeding period is longer on the nights surrounding the full moon."

As far as timing, walleyes could move in anytime after the sun goes down. Some nights the best bite occurs shortly after 9 p.m. Other nights it may not occur until around midnight. And sometimes the fish are still feeding at 2 a.m., although few fishermen remain long enough for this late bite.

If you decide to try the night bite, be sure to arrive early. Any stream mouth with public access fills up quickly with anglers. You need to be there well before sunset to secure a position on the beach. However, if you can locate an out-of-the-way hotspot, chances are you will have it to yourself.



A large crappie fish is the central focus, held vertically by a person's hands. The fish has a silvery, speckled pattern on its body and a white underbelly. Its mouth is open, showing a bright green lure. The background is dark and out of focus, showing parts of a person's clothing and a fishing rod.

**Western
Pennsylvania's**

**BIG
RIVER
CRAPPIES**

by Jeff Knapp

The major rivers of western Pennsylvania provide nearly 200 miles of fishing. Consider, for instance, the opportunities available on the lower Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. Walleyes, saugers and smallmouth bass enjoy much of the limelight, but anglers catch many other gamefish species.

In most instances these opportunities are localized, where the sport may be somewhat limited, but of good quality nonetheless. Such is the case with the crappie fishery in these two rivers.

For the uninitiated, the Monongahela and lower Allegheny rivers are actually a series of miniature impoundments, created by a system of navigational locks and dams. Some current is still present, however.

Generally speaking, fishing these rivers is a 12-month affair. Something always seems to be biting, and crappies show up throughout the year.

Anglers accustomed to catching bunches of springtime crappies may not be overwhelmed with the numbers produced from these waters, but they would be hard pressed to find bigger ones. Western Pennsylvania river crappies tend to be large, with 12-inch fish quite common.

How many crappies are there?

According to the Commission's Area Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson, getting a handle on the crappie population is difficult. Lorson says crappies tend to be too small to be caught in gillnets, and they often stay deeper than the effective range of electrofishing efforts. He relies mostly on reports from anglers, which indicate that the crappie population isn't a particularly dense one, but that it's comprised of good-sized fish. Many crappie catches are made by anglers targeting other species.

Both black and white crappies are found in these waters. If one species has the edge in numbers, black crappies have it.

From practical observation, most of the Allegheny River crappies I catch are taken from deep water. I'd consider 15 feet to be shallow, and 30 feet isn't uncommon. Crappies are found in the same places as walleyes and saugers, though usually from deeper water. Other than when the fish move shallow for the brief spawning period, I've found this to be the case year-round.

Consider a typical experience that took place on the lower Allegheny River near Clinton.

Mark Pasko and I were fishing a major river hole located below a large sand/gravel bar. This particular hole bottoms out at about 40 feet. Two shoreline-connected points extend into the hole, tapering from about five to 20 feet of water between them before dropping off quickly.

The display on my sonar unit indicated the presence of fish suspended near the dropoff. Mark and I were fishing minnow-tipped jigs directly under the boat. We had hits—of the *tap-tap* variety—but we could not catch what was responsible

Anglers accustomed to catching bunches of springtime crappies may not be overwhelmed with the numbers produced from these waters, but they would be hard pressed to find bigger ones. Western Pennsylvania river crappies tend to be large, with 12-inch fish quite common.



for them. We were pursuing walleyes, so we were expecting more energetic bites.

One of us was patient enough to allow what proved to be a slab-sided crappie the chance to inhale the quarter-ounce jig. When we realized that we had found crappies instead of walleyes, Mark and I began using the smallest minnows in the bucket. Going to a lighter jig was not possible because we were fishing in 35 feet of water.

We pulled a half-dozen crappies off the spot before the action subsided. That may not seem like many fish, but these fish were all in the 11-inch to 12-inch range—magnum crappies. This same spot has yielded many similar crappie catches on subsequent outings.

I've found the general locations of Allegheny River crappies to be in deep holes with very little current. Often, what current is present is reversed—part of an eddy. This often occurs below large gravel/sand bars that jut out into the main current.

The Allegheny River has a history of dredging activity, because sand and gravel have been scoured from the bottom for their value as building commodities. Dredged holes typically reach a depth of about 45 feet. When such holes are located off the main channel in a strong current, river crappies are of-



- A** = Brady's Bend
- B** = Cowanshanhock
- C** = Rosston
- D** = Tarentum
- E** = Springdale
- F** = Deer Creek
- G** = Southside
- H** = Rochester
- I** = Leetsdale
- J** = Elizabeth
- K** = Monongahela
- L** = Speers
- M** = East Fredricktown
- N** = Rices Landing
- O** = Point Marion
- P** = McKeesport
- Q** = Boston

Controlled Slipping

Fishing deep water can be intimidating, but it's not all that difficult. By using a technique known as river slipping, it's possible to fish a quarter-ounce jig efficiently in 35 feet of water.

The essence of river slipping is moving the boat along at a speed identical to that of the bait's downriver drift. Visualize dropping a jig to the bottom in 20-foot depths. If the boat remains stationary, the river's current will wash it away. Conversely, if you make the same drop and quickly motor downriver, you'll drag the jig behind you. The trick is to find the medium, where the speed of movement of both the boat and the bait is the same.

The easiest way to gauge this speed is the angle of the fishing line as it enters the water. If it points downriver, you need to speed up the boat to catch up. If it points upriver, slow down. I like to use a transom-mounted electric trolling motor to make the necessary moves to accomplish this controlled slip. It takes some practice to master, but it makes you a much more effective river rat.—JK.

Public Access

Allegheny River

Cowanshanhock Creek Access. Located just north of Kittanning. Provides access to Pool 7.

Kittanning Borough Ramp. Located just off Water Street in Kittanning. Provides access to Pool 6.

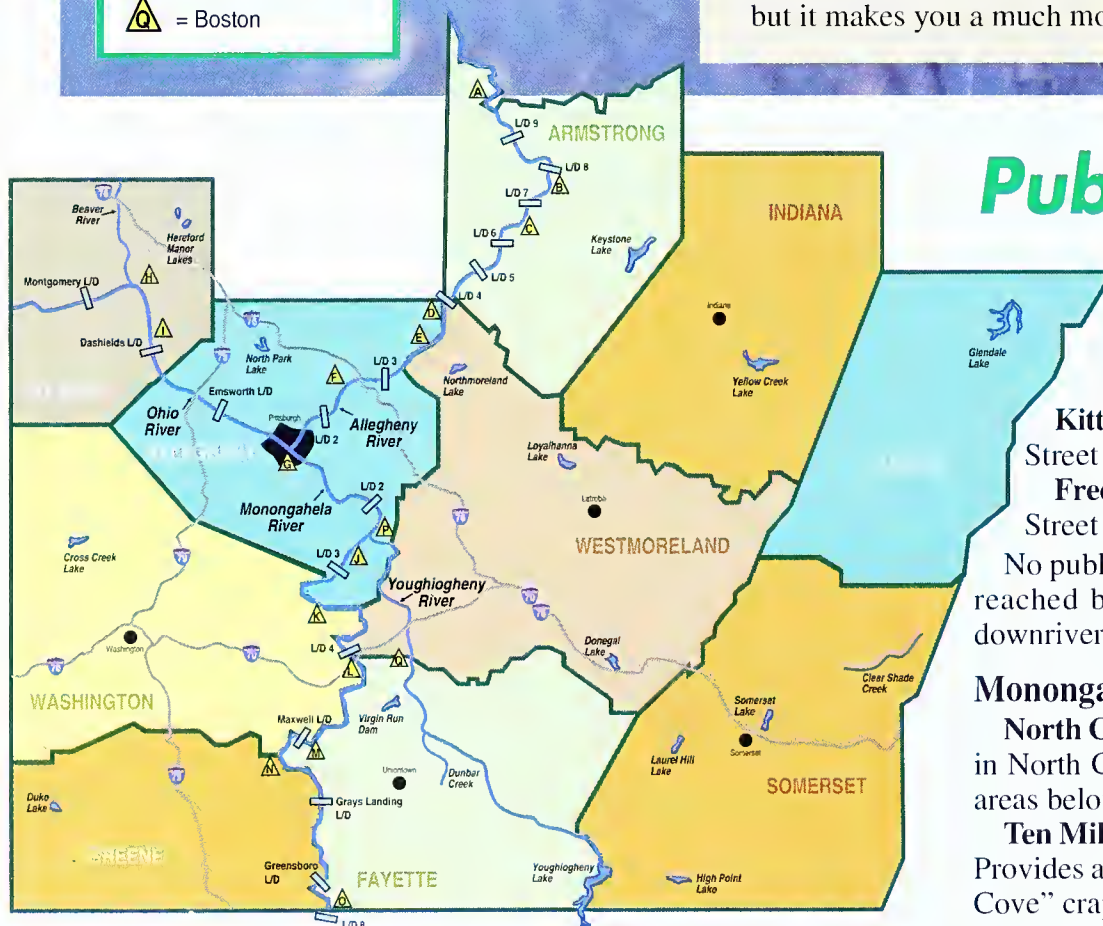
Freeport Borough Ramp. Located just off Water Street in Freeport. Provides access to Pool 4.

No public access is available on Pool 5, but it can be reached by locking through from either upriver or downriver.

Monongahela River

North Charleroi Access. Located near Seventh Street in North Charleroi, off Route 88. Provides access for areas below Lock and Dam 4. Limited parking.

Ten Mile Public Ramp. Located up Ten Mile Creek. Provides access to the Maxwell Pool, as well as "Green Cove" crappie fishing.



ten present. They sometimes frequent the mouths of large feeder creeks, particularly during the late-evening hours.

Side channels and backwaters also play host to Allegheny River crappies. Side channels are dredged and are often fairly deep. Several are located along the navigable portion of the Allegheny, and they tend to hold crappies year-round.

Backwaters are natural "slough-type" waters. These are found most often in island areas. It's rare to find the kind of depth that holds crappies throughout the year in these areas, but important spawning habitat is often present.

Allegheny River hotspots

The portions of the Allegheny I fish regularly are Pool 4 to Pool 7. Within this section are several good crappie holes.

Directly across the river from the Fish and Boat Commission's Cowanshannock Access is a large, dredged side channel. It's quite deep. Most of the water is over 20 feet deep with some spots reading 30. This is one of the best crappie areas on Pool 7, particularly during the spawning period in April.

The habitat on Pool 6 is diverse, and several good crappie holes can be found there. Just below the Route 422 high-level bridge is a deep hole, near the river's western shore. Depths there reach 45 feet, and crappies tend to suspend near the sheer dropoffs that line the perimeter of the hole.

A deep trench can be found in the channel between the eastern shore of the Allegheny and Ross Island. Depths range to 30 feet, surrounded by 10 to 15 feet of water. This is a good crappie area, as is the dredged notch in the leading edge of Ross Island. Beavers have taken over this little spot, and it's full of wood.

A final area worth checking for crappies in Pool 6 is the deep trough located across the river from Logansport.

Pools 5 and 4 are relatively small, but each has a productive crappie spot or two. The deep hole below Taylor Run is the top area on Pool 5. A dredged side channel below the Freeport bridge accounts for most of the crappies I catch in Pool 4. Two submerged trees nearly always hold crappies.

Mon River picks

Another successful crappie angler fishes the section of the Monongahela about 40 to 60 miles upriver of Pittsburgh. Within this stretch are two major lock and dam systems, one near Charleroi and the other just upriver of Brownsville.

Mon River crappies, like the ones in the Allegheny, tend to be large, though it's uncommon to yank 20 or more out of the river in one day. Many of these crappies are in the 12-inch range, and some anglers catch ones that are nearly 14 inches. These crappies average 10 inches.

One of the notable differences in the two rivers is depth. The Mon River isn't nearly as deep as the Allegheny. Still, depth is a relative factor, and many Mon River crappies are taken from deep water. It's just that 20 feet is considered deep on the Mon, and depths of twice that are fairly common on the Allegheny. The point is that these crappies tend to use the deepest available water on both rivers much of the time.

Most of the fixed-crest dams on the Monongahela have been replaced by gated dams. The remnants of an old, inactive lock structure are a top crappie hotspot. It's located about a half-mile below Lock and Dam 4, near Charleroi. The lockhouse is still present, and furnishes an obstruction, creating a current break and crappie-attracting structure.

If you want to fill up a 5-gallon bucket, stick to a crappie lake. If you want to catch a few big ones, hit the Mon or the Allegheny.

When the crappies move shallow in the spring to spawn, anglers often catch them in this same general area but close to shore. Flooded willow trees, when the water is up, furnish one of the top springtime crappie patterns.

About a half-mile farther down the river, on the opposite shore, is the Monessen Mill. Anglers count on the area around the mill, with its plentiful manmade structure and current breaks, to produce five or six good crappies per trip.

Another crappie haunt is located just above the Maxwell Dam, near the town of Millsboro. Ten Mile Creek empties into the Mon River there.

Two excellent crappie spots are located there. The actual mouth of Ten Mile Creek is one spot. Just up Ten Mile Creek from the mouth is a boat basin called Green Cove, which is another crappie magnet. Key in on the docks, fishing them one at a time until you locate the cover that's holding the fish. You can fish this area from shore.

River crappie techniques

For getting down to the Allegheny's deep crappies, I stay with the same quarter-ounce jigs I use for walleyes and saugers. The Fireball jig, a special short-shank jig made by Northland Tackle Company, is ideal for this fishing. It has the weight necessary to reach 25 to 35 feet down, without the added bulk of a plastic dressing. I use small fathead minnows when fishing specifically for crappies.

Another good option is small blade baits, models in the quarter-ounce size. Examples include Sonars and Silver Luckies. Jigging spoons in smaller sizes also account for river crappies. These spoons include the Swedish Pimple, Rocker Minnow and Hopkins spoon.

When river crappies are using deep water, they often suspend off the bottom. You may catch lots of walleyes and saugers dragging the bottom, but the same tactic may not be so productive on crappies. Go slowly and fish various depths while working the lure back to the boat.

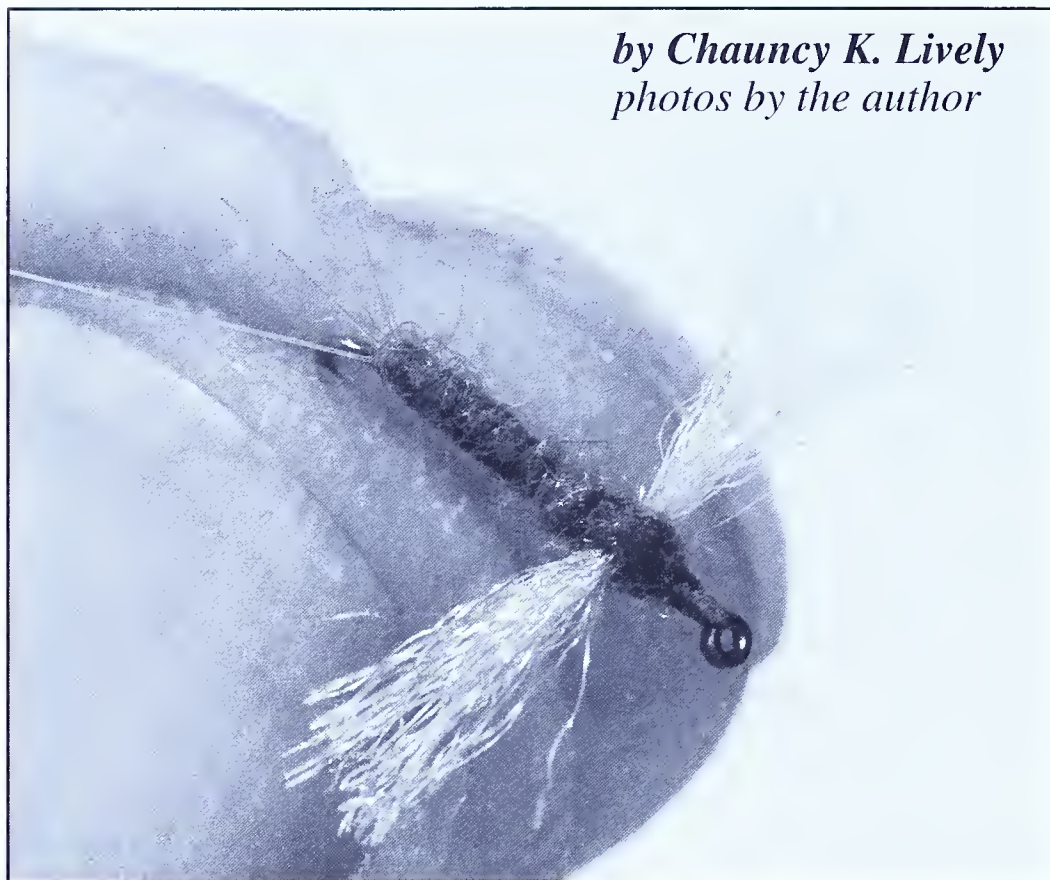
Some anglers stay with a lighter jig, usually eighth-ounce, to work the more shallow water of the Monongahela. If necessary, place a tiny splitshot a foot or so up the line. When the springtime fish are shallow, pitch a tiny jig (1/16-ounce) and bobber set up next to the flooded willow trees. Tip the jig with a small minnow. A slow, twitching retrieve outproduces a stationary one.

Western Pennsylvania's big-river crappies may not be the most popular species in these waters. If you're looking to fill up a five-gallon bucket, you might want to stick to a prolific crappie lake. But if the prospect of catching a slab-sided crappie appeals to you, the Monongahela and the Allegheny could be the waters to choose.



An Olive Spinner

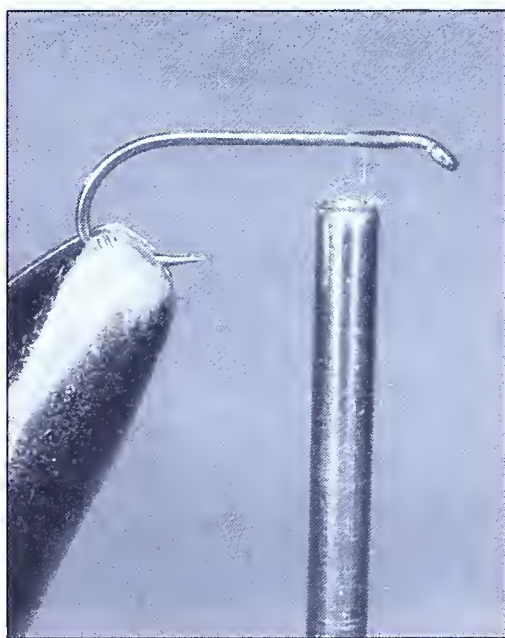
*by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author*



In the life cycle of the mayfly, the imago, or spinner stage, is its adult or mature phase. Mayfly spinners are incredibly delicate creatures. Having shed the subimaginal skin of the dun phase, the wings of most species become glass-clear, sometimes with a faint tinting of amber or pale gray. The front legs become elongated—more so in the males—and the tails of the males become very long. The compound eyes are generally large, and in most species they are larger in the males than in females. Overall, however, females of a given species are larger than the males.

Often the body color of the males differs from the females. Before egg-laying, the female's abdomen often takes on the hue of the eggs inside, because of its transparent body sheath. In several species, after the eggs have been expelled, the abdomen becomes virtually colorless. In others the color may shift considerably.

Strange to say, fishing to mayfly spinners in the U.S.—that is, consciously representing them with specific dry flies—was slow to develop. Only in the past few decades has spinner fishing really caught on as a separate branch of fly fishing—as unique in its own way as, say, nymph fishing.



1 Tie in the thread about a quarter of the shank length behind the eye.



2 Cut a sparse bunch of Z-lou to a length of one inch—slightly longer than you'll need. Lay it across the shank and bind it with criss-cross turns of thread. Then trim the ends to achieve an effective wing length equal to the shank length.



3 Select three microfibets and tie them in together for an effective tail length of 1 1/2 times the shank length. Wind them forward over the tail butts and back to the base of the tail. With a dubbing needle separate the tails and wind between them to secure the angle of spread.

I remember an incident, not too many years ago, when we were fishing the Green Drake hatch. It was evening and the Coffin Flies were on the water, stirring the trout to a feeding frenzy. I was netting a fine brown trout when a nearby fisherman came over to see the fish. "What fly are you using?" He asked. "Coffin Fly spinner," I replied. He bristled. "A spinner? Don't you know this is a fly-fishing-only stream? You can get arrested for using spinners here!" After I released the trout I showed him the fly and assured him it wasn't hardware in any form. I'm still not sure he was totally convinced.

That was in 1959 and fly anglers today are far more knowledgeable. Chances are, if the same scene were re-enacted today, the questioner would accept that the fly was a Coffin Fly spinner but would ask, "male or female?"

When one observes the typical sporadic emergence of duns over a span of several hours, it's difficult to appreciate the total number of flies leaving the water. But after they transpose and take flight again—this time as spinners—they do so en masse in numbers that often belie earlier impressions. Small wonder that such an

accumulation of flies from an emergence may trigger furious feeding activity by the same trout that earlier regarded the intermittent appearance of duns with a ho-hum attitude.

East of the Rockies there are three *Ephemerellidae* that anglers call Blue-Winged Olives—or simply, Olives: *cornuta*, *attenuata* and *lata*. These are apart from the so-called Little Olives, consisting of various species of tiny *Baetis* and *Pseudocloeon* mayflies. Duns of the three above species are surprisingly alike in appearance, if not in size. All have slate-gray wings, greenish-olive bodies, pale-olive legs and three tails of varying shades of olive. Female spinners have clear wings and brownish-olive bodies. Bodies of male spinners are generally dark brown—sometimes with a faint olive cast. As a general rule, in terms of hook size, *cornuta* is a size 14, *attenuata*, a size 16 and *lata*—the smallest of the three—a size 18. As always, all are subject to slight variations in size from stream to stream.

Because spinners of the three Olive species share the same general appearance, a single pattern of appropriate size serves for all. The spent wings of the Olive

Spinner pattern are fashioned from a single sparse bunch of pale dun Z-lon. Z-lon is a fine, tough synthetic fiber ideally suited for this purpose. It exhibits a sheen not unlike the glassy appearance of mayfly spinner wings, and it does not absorb water—a welcome feature in any dry fly. The three tails are pale microfibetts, separated and wound between to maintain their posture. The body dubbing should be sparse to form a tapered abdomen but should thicken in the thorax area. The latter is accomplished by a winding procedure described in the tying instructions.

Olive spinner flights generally occur late in the day. In fact, they occur often at dusk. It's the witching hour, full of promise—a time when I like to fish an Olive Spinner because I know it will be fuss-free during the busy time ahead.

Pennsylvania
ANGLER

Dressing: Olive Spinner

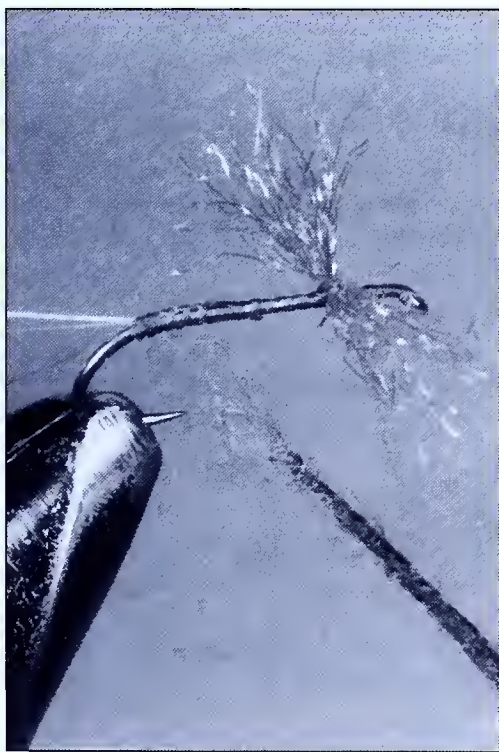
Hook: Sizes 14 to 18, regular shank, fine wire.

Thread: Olive 6/0 prewaxed.

Wings: Sparse bunch of pale Z-lon.

Tails: Three pale microfibetts.

Body: Dubbing of brownish-olive natural or synthetic fur.



4 Wax two inches of thread to the shank and pinch-dub the fur in a tapered configuration.

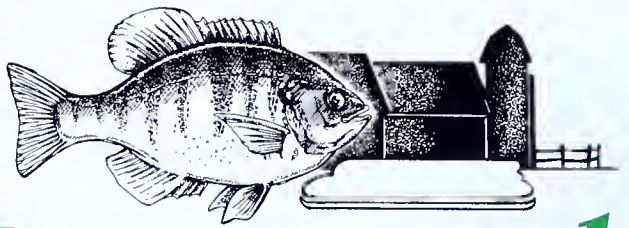


5 Wind the dubbing evenly to the rear of the wings.



6 Make a full turn of dubbing in front of the wings. Then bring the dubbing under the thorax and make a full turn behind the wings. Now make criss-cross turns over the base of the wings and wind the final turn at the fore end of the thorax. Apply a drop of lacquer to the top of the thorax. Whip-finish behind the eye and lacquer the head.

Family Fun at Pennsylvania Farm Ponds



by Bruce Ingram

They range in size from little potholes barely larger than mud puddles to 40-acre waterways that justifiably can be called mini-impoundments. Known variously as stock ponds, watering holes or just plain ponds, farm ponds are fishing holes typically teeming with largemouth bass, bluegills and catfish.

To me, the main virtue of farm ponds is that they are great close-to-home places that are super locales for my family to enjoy the outdoors together. What's more, it's easy to gear up for a farm pond with little outlay required for rods, reels, lures and other fishing tackle.

Farm ponds are everywhere around Pennsylvania and offer close-to-home angling regardless of where you live. Even a short drive outside the city limits of the state's major urban areas results in your entering "farm pond territory."

To find farm ponds, contact local tackle or sporting goods shops, visit country stores or cruise rural backroads. Sometimes a small town's chamber of commerce can supply information about where to find farm ponds.

Gaining access

When I was 10 years old, a schoolboy chum and I spent an anxious summer casting covetous eyes on a particularly fishy stretch of a creek near our homes. Although we had permission from the landowner to fish much of the stream, the forbidden waters of that stretch made them seem like Shangri-la to us.

Ignoring the posted signs, early one August morning we slipped into those waters, and after making only a few casts we were apprehended by the landowner. After exhorting us to leave and never come back, the woman told us that she would have given us permission to fish her creek if we had only asked.

And that is all you have to do on many occasions to gain access to prime Pennsylvania farm ponds. A courteous request to fish a pond is often greeted with a polite response that you may do so. If you tell the landowner that you are looking for a place to take your family and kids fishing, then your request is all the more difficult to reject.

There are a few simple rules to keep in mind that ensure your continued access. Be sure to follow the landowner's dictates on whether or not to keep fish. Some may not care whether or not fish are kept. Others may want you to release all bass and may want you to keep a limited number of bluegills and catfish. Remember also to pick up trash, close gates, and call the landowner before you arrive.

Gearing up

I read recently that it cost on average some \$75 for a family of four to spend an evening at a major league ballpark. To be sure, an evening spent rooting for the Phillies or Pirates is a fine way to enjoy a night out, but many such "average" nights can be family budget-breakers.

For far less than \$75, the average mom and dad can gear up

two offspring with enough fishing equipment so that they can enjoy a season's worth of angling pleasure.

For example, a good-quality spincasting outfit costs around \$15. There is absolutely no reason to buy an expensive spinning or baitcasting outfit in the beginning. If your child becomes enamored with the sport, then buy the child a more costly rod and reel later.

You can buy a season's worth of line, hooks, sinkers and bobbers for less than \$20. If you want to splurge, buy a few topwater plugs, spinners or spoons—that's all the lures your kids need to begin fishing.

For bait, why not get your own? One of the most educational activities you can do with your kids is to search for live beasties to go fishing with. Last summer, I took my two kids (Sarah, then age seven; and Mark, then age four) on several bait gathering escapades.

Looking under wet leaves, we found salamanders and worms; probing under old logs, we captured beetles, grubs and crickets; and seining the creek that runs near our house, we corraled crayfish, hellgrammites, sculpins, snails and various species of minnows.

What's educational about all those outings? After every trip, Sarah, Mark, and I consulted various field guides to learn just what we had captured. We identified each critter, discussed what it ate and which other creatures consumed it, and together Sarah and Mark learned much about the food chain. When my two tykes study biology in school, I am sure that the hands-on experiences they have had will make the study of living creatures more meaningful to them.

Even if your kids are older than mine, or if they're teenagers, they can still enjoy these activities. Once they are given the opportunity, individuals of all ages enjoy interacting with nature.

How-to tips

A farm pond is quite probably the easiest kind of waterway to fish. And that's what makes it ideal for family excursions or for people just starting out with the sport. Given a pond's small size, sooner or later your casts will land near the fish.

For largemouth bass and catfish, target the deeper reaches of these mini-impoundments. A drain pipe is often a clue to where the deeper end is. Plastic worms take bass regularly and the worms and minnows that you have captured appeal to bluegills, bass and catfish.

Bluegills typically congregate in the shallower environs, and a lively cricket or worm dangled under a bobber almost surely results in one of these panfish becoming very cooperative. If the landowner has given permission, be sure to take some of the bluegills home for supper—they're delicious.

Fishing, farm ponds and family fun go together naturally. For inexpensive family entertainment and for the enjoyment of a wholesome sport, take the whole family fishing.





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photo-Russ Gettig





Getting the EDGE

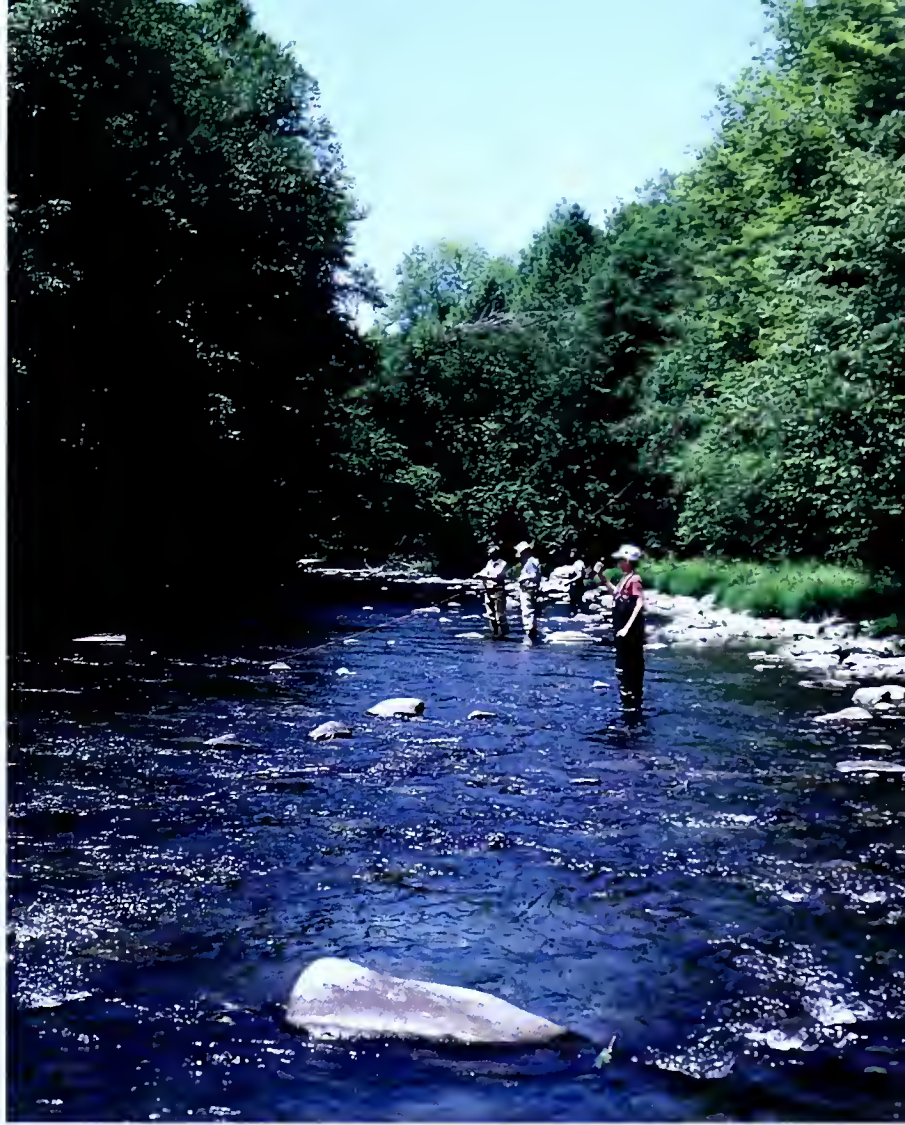
by Tom Fegely

“Edges” are known scientifically as ecotones—the places where two or more diverse habitats meet, and these places are important hiding and feeding places for a variety of gamefish.

Some anglers know that the most productive habitat on a stream or river is also found along the “edges”—small sectors where habitats, currents, temperatures and other features of a fish’s environment merge or blend.

In short, finding these productive edges is little more than a form of “reading the water.” Books have been written on the subject of finding that small percentage of water holding the highest percentage of fish. Other than fly fishermen, however, many anglers ignore the obvious in their stream, river, lake and pond patrols.

photo-Tom Fegely



“Getting the edge” is one key to increasing your angling success.

Don’t confuse edges with structure or cover, although they’re surely related. Structure is a permanent fixture of a lake or waterway, such as submerged logs, boat docks, pilings or rocks.

Cover ranges from weedbeds and undercut banks to hiding places in fallen trees. Prey species hide in cover. Gamefish seek them there, although many predators, like pike and bass, lurk along the edge of cover waiting for a meal to stray from the cover’s safety.



photo-Tom Fegely

Fish are attracted to edges both part-time or full-time for a variety of reasons—from passing through from deep water to a shallow feeding area or because of temperature preference or food availability.

Here are a few kinds of “edges” to consider next time out.

Current

The most obvious edges are those you detect simply by taking time to study flowing water. Accomplished fly fishermen know that trout lurk where food is delivered to them and where they don’t needlessly expend energy by constantly fighting the current. In short, they frequent the currents’ edges.

The fishing mentor with whom I spent many pleasant days some 40 years back seldom walked to a stream and immediately cast a line. Instead, particularly when fishing a new waterway, he’d pause or wander along the bank, gazing across the stream or river. Then he’d slowly wade in, as if stalking a deer, and cast.

Those lessons during my years as a small fry have been invaluable in giving me the edge on many occasions.

Current edges occur below obstructions such as rocks and submerged trees, at the downstream ends of islands, where tributaries enter streams and rivers, and along shoreline eddies.

Not all water currents are visible at the surface, although most can be readily detected. Some currents are created by deflections of hidden obstacles, which form rotating patterns.

Boils, for example, are created by large submerged rocks, creating a swirling cauldron visible at the surface. Casting to the edge of the boil carries the bait into the natural eddy below the boulder.

In studying any water, watch drifting leaves, insects or other debris and note their travel paths. Drifting a fly or bait along the same route often yields a trout or two that might otherwise not have been caught.

And when one fish is removed, another soon occupies the desirable lair.

Visible obstructions

Whether fishing for trout, bass or any stream or river fish, visible obstructions (structure, if you prefer) are the focal points. Even though such structures are obvious, the effect they have on adjacent waters deserves attention.

Foremost are rocks rising above the surface and the characteristic V-shaped “edges” formed as flows are diverted around the obstacles. Fish, trout and bass in particular, lie within the Vs—taking advantage of the feeding lanes on each side and the protective eddies directly behind the rocks.

Casts should be directed above an exposed rock, allowing the bait or fly to drift naturally within the fish’s target range.

Islands in rivers with moderate to fast flows may be thought of merely as larger “rocks,” creating similar but more spacious edges. They’re not as narrowly delineated as the small, faster wedges of water in which fish lurk and feed.

Depending on their locations within a river, an island or any shoreline protrusion creates merging currents on only one side—the side with the strongest current. Smallmouth bass and other fish lie just inside the disturbed water, darting into the current to snag aquatic flies and floating insects. The protected areas directly downstream also attract minnows and small fish on which larger fish prey.

Visible structure in lakes provides obvious fish-rich haunts, ranging from standing timber, boat docks and rockpiles to low-head dams, pilings and sandbars.

Each holds an attraction for fish and creates its own unique edge effect. Find two habitats—perhaps a large rock or deadfall within casting distance of a weedbed—and you may discover the mother lode.

In flowing water such edges are usually easier to pinpoint. One of the favored early season shad hotspots on the Delaware River is a Bucks County wing dam through which all migratory fish must pass. But anglers also know that they travel the edges of the current, so anglers cast darts above and below the dam where the river’s steady flow changes abruptly.

Walleyes, smallmouth bass and catfish also lie just upstream of the dam and others inhabit the scoured hole below the fast-flowing funnel at the edges of the currents. Turbulence can be devastating in such areas, forcing the fish to the outer limits of such an “edge.”

Anglers, too, must consider the dangers in wading close to or attempting to anchor in such places. If anchoring

or wading opportunities hold potential problems, stay away.

Waterfalls

Most streams and many rivers have falls of one sort or another. They’re not necessarily Niagara, but each offers a prime site to present a lure or bait.

Small dams and natural or manmade waterfalls are fascinating to anglers, magnetically attracting them. Such places, especially below rocky, natural falls, seldom offer the chance for long casts on small streams, although there are many exceptions. Weighted nymphs or garden worms dropped into the pool below a falls attract the attention of fish lurking next to or beneath the deep edges of rocks.

Baits cast into the churning water often draw instant strikes as they seek the points of least resistance. Fish living there know a missed opportunity never returns because the food is washed quickly away if they don’t take advantage of each opportunity. Approaching such places cautiously is usually more important than making a delicate presentation.

Most falls also create backwashes, churning food and debris downward and occasionally entrapping it in the boil. Fish may dart into such flows, but more often they capture whatever approaches their territory along the edges.

Shallow streams with manmade structures aerate the stream and create pools in which trout or smallmouth bass hunt, at-



tracted by food and the increased oxygen content. Again, the line where the accelerated flow and slower waters meet offer the best opportunities.

Where such falls are found, opening day trout anglers typically flock. Fish may be caught in these places, but returning a day or week later when the disturbance has subsided usually brings more action.

Discolored water

Both still and flowing water present situations where muddy or tannic-stained flows regularly or sporadically meet. Heavy rains that wash silt into small drainages eventually dump into streams or rivers, creating highly visible “edges” that have dual attraction for fish.

One attraction is the obvious supply of food washed with the murky flow. The other is the visible “barrier” of silty water that may deter a fish from entering too deeply or for too long a time. It’s along this merger of clear and stained water that lures should be presented.

One of my favorite spring sucker spots occurs where a stream (which flows through farmland) dumps into a river. The “edge” of the murky and clear water is always a sucker and catfish hotspot with an occasional bass and carp also taking hold of the worm-baited hooks.

In mountain counties, particularly in the Poconos where I do much of my fishing, tannic acid bogs and brooks are common. The stained brooks flow into rivers and lakes where stain lines can be found. These edges deserve consideration when seeking fish such as pickerel, pike and even trout.

The enticing “edge” here may be attributed more to the variation in the acidity of the water (tannic waters are highly acidic) where fish find their preferable pH ranges.

Temperature variations

Temperature variations in streams and rivers are common although they may not be sufficiently diverse to affect the number of fish living in a specific spot. However, springs in small streams, tributaries that flow from shadowed forests, and warmwater discharges at power plants offer the divisive temperature variations to which fish are attracted.

Each species has its own temperature preference, ranging from the general 55-degree preference for brook and rainbow trout to 69 degrees for walleyes, 72 degrees for striped bass and the 78-degree comfort zone for catfish.

Warmwater discharges affect fish from late fall through spring. Power plants on rivers discharge their generator-cooling waters, which provide a variation of temperature ranges, attracting both baitfish and their predators. The temperature “edges” preferred by the varied species span a wide range.

Although not as dramatically variable, high-wall hydroelectric or flood control dams release warmer water from below a reservoir’s surface, cooling tailrace waters in summer and warming them in winter.

Fish flock to temperatures within their comfort ranges—and wise fishermen follow suit.

Weedlines

Shallow lakes are often thick with grasses, pads, spatterdock and other weedy growths. The vegetation may hold anything from pike and pickerel to bass and perch, but it’s a fact that fish densities are greatest along the edge of the weedline (inside and out).

“Reading the water” in such a habitat means “reading the vegetation.” Narrow boat trails slicing through a grass bed call for long, straight casts. Openings within the beds should also be scoured with weedless spoons, buzzbaits, spinnerbaits and other lures that cause minimal hangups. Cast ahead into such cuts while gradually paddling or trolling through with an electric motor.

Each break in dense vegetation offers an edge effect. Predatory fish lie along each side awaiting baitfish.

Dropoffs, channels

Submerged “edges” are the most difficult to pinpoint. Topographic maps indicate steep dropoffs by the closeness of adjacent contour lines. Depthfinders do a better job, pinpointing slopes and ledges that may hold fish day and night.

Trout and bass often lie on the edges of shelves sloping from the shoreline. Sunlight, temperature and wind velocity and direction influence the depths at which they lie. Channels in five to eight feet of water are also hotspots and relatively easy to pinpoint with electronic apparatus. Where channels widen, troll or cast along the drops, not always in the channel’s center.

Backtrolling, in which the boat is slowly motored in reverse, lets the handler stay on the channel edge. Anglers sit in front, allowing their baits (worms or minnows) to maneuver along the channel’s edge. Sharp bends in such channels deserve particular attention because they usually form a deep hole on the outside edge.

Light, shade

Consider also that the preferred edge at any particular time of day is influenced by which side is shaded and which is struck by sunlight.

Several years ago a friend and I spent a day backtrolling along the meandering channel at Beltzville Lake in Carbon County. It took us an hour or so to discover that the fish were holding on the shady side of the channel. By shifting our backtrolling pattern to cover the shady side of the street, our walleye and bass catch rate tripled.

Obviously the line between sunlight and shade changes throughout the day. Fish generally hold in the darker water.

Overhanging trees often provide a stream or lakeshore with its main sources of shade. Even though fish are strongly affected by available structure, they often linger just inside the line between shade and sunlight. Casting into the shade and reeling a plug or spinner toward the light areas can draw a hit at the edge of the light and dark water.

Swimming platforms, boat docks, exposed rocks, standing timber and other above-surface structure all attract fish during warm, bright days. Make your first casts to the shady side of the structure.

Edges of the day

Of course, two “edges” are also strongly influenced by sunlight and darkness: dusk and dawn.

Light-sensitive species like walleyes travel into shallows to feed at dusk and leave as the morning light brightens to the east. Most other species of gamefish also use the edges of the day for traveling and feeding.

For the angler it’s simply a matter of being there to “get the edge.”



LOW & SLOW

for Early Season Trout

by Mike Bleech

I remember when I was a scuba diver that in a river there is a narrow strip of water very close to bottom where the force of the current is broken by friction with bottom debris. When the diver in front of me kicked up dirt from the bottom, the shape of the strip of broken current was revealed as a network of mingling swirls. While diving in strong current, we had to hug close to the bottom to make any headway.

Trout behave similarly early in the season, while the water is cold. The spring runoff water is typically in the 35-degree to 45-degree range. Like most cold-blooded creatures, trout conserve energy when their environment is colder than a "preferred" temperature range. They move relatively slowly, and as little as possible. This temperature range for trout is, roughly, from the low 50s to the low 60s. So early in the season, trout are reluctant to stray from the bottom, because it takes too much energy to fight the current.

If you want to catch stream trout consistently early in the season, concentrate on keeping your lures and baits close to the bottom, moving slowly. If you apply this idea, you will catch your share of trout.

Understanding this idea and matching your tactics to it are different matters, though. Keeping your baits and lures low and slow requires the right tackle and rigging, adaptability, and concentration.

Tackle, rigging

Start with the right tackle. You have to get this straight before you go fishing. Too often we treat tackle lightly. Fact is, there is flexibility with some parts of your fishing outfit, but some parts should be just so.

The parts that must be just so—the key parts—change from one kind of fishing to another. For drifting bait early in the trout season, the key parts are the hook, sinker, and line, or leader.

Hooks should be just the right size to match the bait. Here are some examples: If your bait is maggots, the hook should be about size 10. Using single salmon eggs, the hook should

be about the same diameter as the eggs. For large red worms use a size 8 hook. The idea is to keep the hook as inconspicuous as possible. In each case, use a very sharp, fine-wire hook.

The job of the sinker is to keep the bait in the fish-catching depth zone, which in this case is close to the bottom. Unlike a few weeks later in the season when you typically want to drift the bait freely with the current, now you want to get the bait under the current. It is acceptable if the sinker anchors the bait from time to time. Ideally, the sinker should bounce and drag along the bottom slower than the current above it.

The precise weight required to keep the bait where you want it changes frequently in a trout stream. You might want to change weights several times in a single pool. Therefore, use sinkers that can be added and removed quickly. I suggest an assortment of splitshot, the kind with the tabs that can be squeezed to remove the shot from the line. Instead of assorted sizes, you can use just one small size. Then use more or fewer shot to change weights.

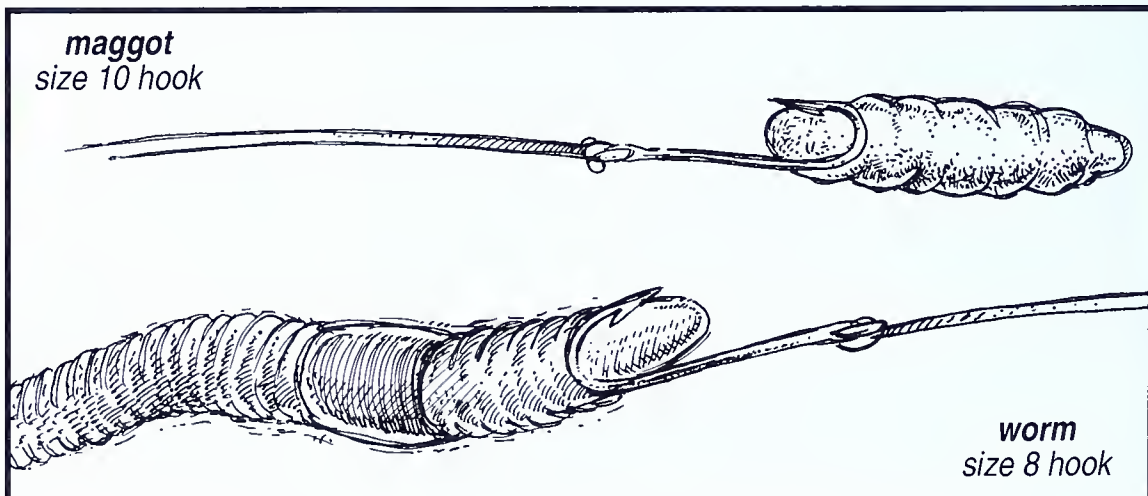
Line

Trout are line-shy. Not every trout is line-shy, but most that survive the opening weekend onslaught of anglers are wary. Use line fine enough to fool the wary trout. I like low-visibility green, four-pound-test line. Keep in mind that it is the diameter and color of fishing line that affects its visibility. Its strength has nothing to do with it. A cheap four-pound line might be more visible than a premium eight-pound line.

Changing your entire spool of line, if it is not right for this fishing, is not necessary. The only part of the line trout see is the last few feet. To save money, take a hint from fly fishermen and use a light leader tied to the end of your main line. Use different leaders to match water conditions. When the water is clear and the trout spooky, you might even want to try a very fine two-pound-test leader. When the water is colored, a likely time to hook big brown trout, an eight-pound leader might help you fool a trophy.

Terminal Rigging FOR BAITS

As you rig your baits, keep in mind that the rig should not overwhelm the bait. Hooks should be well-hidden in the bait. Here is the way some of the popular baits should appear. Hook sizes are approximate, depending on the hook style and the bait size.



salted minnow
size 10 treble hook
wire harness keeps minnow straight



Rods

The next most important part of your early trout season fishing gear is the rod. You can do a tolerable job with practically any rod. But if you have a choice, use a fairly long, sensitive rod. My favorite is a 7 1/2-foot ultralight graphite rod.

The reason for the long rod is to keep as much line off the water as possible. You want your bait in the relatively slow-moving water close to the bottom. But every current that contacts the line tends to drag the bait. The less water the line passes through, the less drag the bait has.

One of the general rules for trout fishing is to set the hook every time you think you might have a strike. The problem with this tactic is that if you are keeping the sinker in contact with the bottom as it should be, you are going to feel a lot of ticks that feel very much like trout picking up the bait. This becomes less of a problem with a sensitive rod. You can learn the difference between bumping bottom and a fish mouthing the bait—not absolutely, but well enough to make you a more efficient angler.

Rigging your gear is, and should be, simple. It should be simple because the less rigging you have, the less chance there is for a trout to see the rigging. Less is best.

For most baitfishing situations, your terminal rig should consist of just a hook at the end of the line, and one or more splitshot about six inches up the line. Keep the shot this close to the hook so that the hook stays close to the bottom.

Adaptability

A teenage angler and I pulled into a parking space on the

East Branch of Tionesta Creek at the same time. He hurried out of his car and down to the creek. I followed at a more leisurely pace, took a wide path around the pool he was fishing, and began fishing the next pool downstream.

I could see what was going on in his mind. When he realized we were fishing the same direction he hurried ahead, trying to fish each pool before I could. He was soon out of sight.

A few hours later we met again as he walked back up the creek. He apparently was watching me for some time before I saw him. When I looked at him he started to walk briskly away, until I asked, "How'd you do?"

That broke the ice. He walked down the steep bank to me. "Pretty well, I thought," he said, showing me a pair of 10-inch brookies in his creel. "But you've caught a half-dozen from this hole just while I've been watching you, and you're using the same bait as I used. What are you doing that I'm not doing?" He asked.

I sat on a fallen log and invited him to join me and share the corn bread I had baked the night before.

"You were trying too hard to fish all of that water before I did, weren't you?" I asked. Remembering that I had done the same thing many times myself when I was about his age, I gave him my most

understanding grin when I asked him that delicate question.

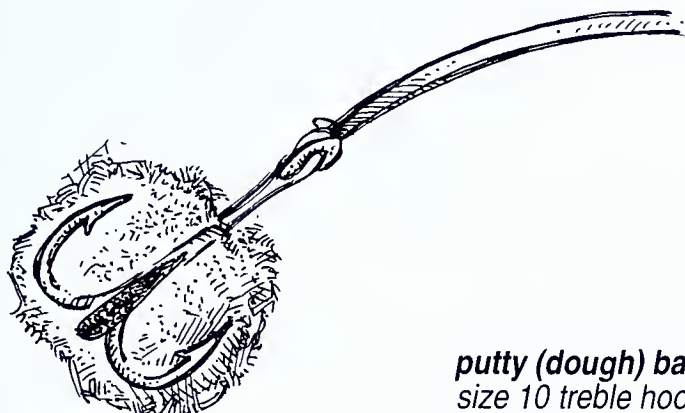
He sheepishly agreed, returning my smile.

Then I explained what I did that he had not done. Indeed, we had used the same bait. The difference was in the sinkers.

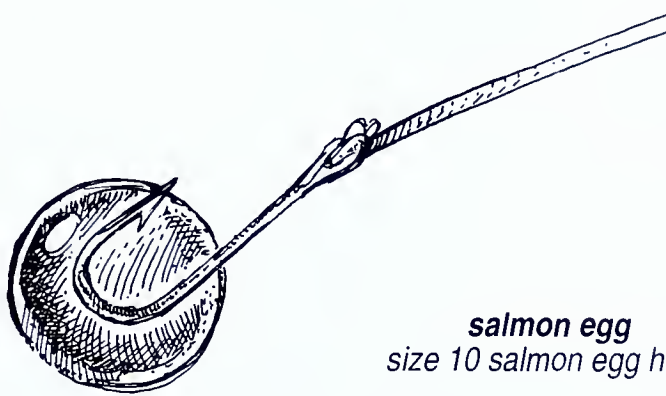
"Did you notice that I re-rigged a few times in this pool?" I asked. "That was the difference."

He was eager to learn, so I explained in detail that in this

When using sinking lures such as spoons or spinners, keep the lure close to the bottom by manipulating the rod tip, and by fishing it sideways in the current as opposed to retrieving directly against the current.



putty (dough) bait
size 10 treble hook



salmon egg
size 10 salmon egg hook

pool the trout I caught were in water varying from a few feet deep to at least five feet deep, and the current varied a lot. Sometimes I used one splitshot, sometimes two, and sometimes three. I used whatever it took to keep my bait drifting along the bottom. When the bait did not tick the bottom enough I added weight. When the sinker snagged too much, I reduced the weight.

That is adaptability. A successful trout angler analyzes each situation and then matches tactics to that situation. This begins with being able to realize whenever the situation changes. It is carried out—and this is where most anglers fall by the wayside—by having the patience to adapt time and time again.

This does not mean just changing sinkers. It means changing anything that needs changing. It means changing baits, changing lures, changing colors, changing line, changing the angle you hold your rod, changing where you are standing. It means changing anything as often as it takes.

Concentration

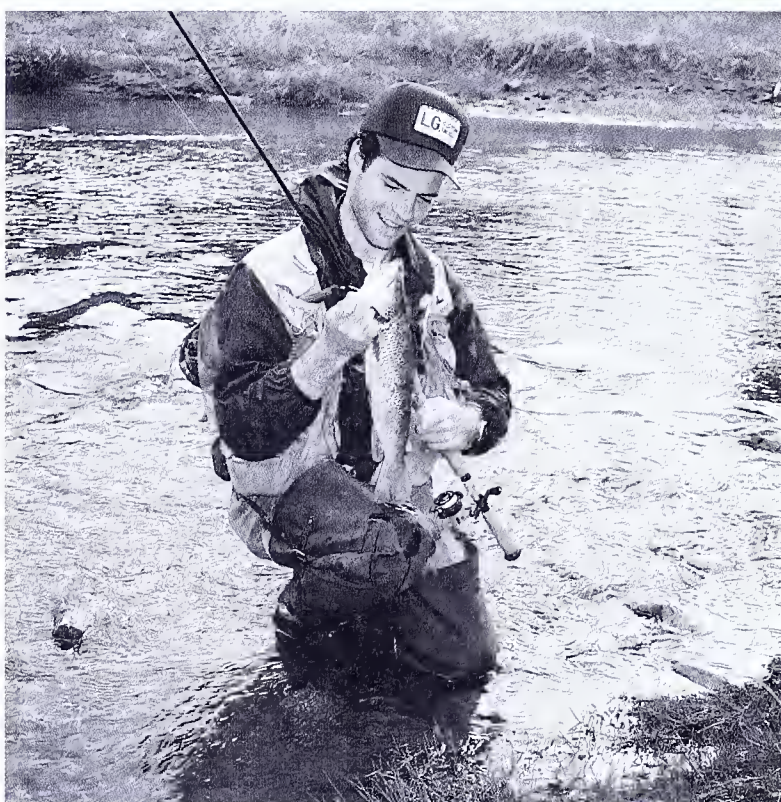
Pay attention to what you are doing.

I readily admit that sometimes I am into a very relaxed kind of fishing, when concentrating is out of the question. Sometimes my thoughts wander to a kingfisher working the next pool downstream, or sometimes my attention focuses on some problem that has been bothering me. That is part of fishing. But when I am serious about catching trout, my mind is completely in the game.

Try to put your mind at the working end of your fishing line. Call it an out-of-body experience, if you wish. You might find this the most relaxing, or the most soul-cleansing at least, way to fish there is, because all other thoughts must be flushed from your conscious mind. I believe that at those times when I am fishing my best, even my unconscious thoughts are on the fishing at hand.

It takes concentration to keep the bait close to the bottom. It takes concentration to feel a trout nibble the bait. It takes concentration to set the hook before the trout rejects the bait. If you have done things right up to this point, concentration brings it all together.

Pennsylvania
ANGLER



Artificials

Using artificial lures when trout have their noses tucked tightly to the bottom can be frustrating if you do not know what you are doing. Simply casting and retrieving, unless you are very lucky, accomplishes little.

But at the same time, artificial lures might be more effective than bait—if the lures are used correctly. If artificial lures are worked slowly and close to the bottom, they often induce strikes from trout that would ignore the tastiest grub, salmon egg or minnow.

Just about any lure can be fished close to the bottom in all but our deepest trout streams. When using sinking lures such as spoons or spinners, keep the lure close to the bottom by manipulating the rod tip, and by fishing it sideways in the current as opposed to retrieving directly against the current. Floating-diving lures can be weighted to take them deeper. Use splitshot about six inches ahead of the lure. In the same manner as you fish with bait, frequent contact with the bottom tells you that the lure is close enough.

Lure color can be very important when fishing for trout—more so than with most other fish. If I had to narrow my artificial lures down to just one, it would have to be a small gold spoon with a bit of bright red or orange. But I would hate to have to narrow it to one.

I learned a lesson on the finicky nature of trout while fishing Kinzua Creek with my pal Bill Anderson. All morning I had great results using a plain gold, size 0 Mepps Aglia spinner. We took a long lunch break at the old Westline Inn, then went back to fishing later in the afternoon. I let Bill off, then drove several hundred yards down the creek before I started fishing. I did not get so much as a bump on my plain gold spinner. Bill, I learned when we met an hour later, had switched to the same spinner with a yellow tail. He caught and released trout at every pool he fished.

A good selection of trout lures should include shiny, loud and natural colors. I do not feel well-armed unless I am carrying gold, silver, white, yellow, orange, blue and black, at least.—MB.

Fishing *the* **EMERGER**

by Dave Wonderlich



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

I believe the complaint I heard most last year during the spring fly hatches was that there were good numbers of flies, but the trout wouldn't take the imitations. Good fly fishermen were changing one dry fly after another in an attempt to match one of the several flies that was on the surface. I was there, too, changing flies.

As if the afternoon sun triggered a switch, the trout began swirling in heavy feeding action. Duns on the surface floated a few yards, niggled, dried their wings, and flew away unmolested. Spinners of another size and color completed their erratic "egg dance" above the water, fell with spent wings to the surface, and floated away untouched.

The scenario seemed to be the rule rather than the exception, and especially last year.

One evening on upper Kettle Creek, trout were making a commotion in their takes just below the water's surface. I watched carefully as one fish created a whirlpool in the smooth water, and then turned as if to attack again. Before the fish could get its mouth around the fly it had been pursuing, the insect, in what seemed to be one quick motion, squirted to the top of the water, dried its wings and flew away. Near me, several fly fishermen were fishing emergers in the surface film as if the insects were lifeless spinners. The flies they were using were good imitations of the naturals, but the behavior the anglers imparted in the fakes was anything but natural.

It is interesting how often we stick to set methods for presenting certain kinds of flies when it is obvious that the natural flies are behaving in a totally different manner. In some circumstances emergers should be fished as the anglers above me were doing, but not when the flies the trout are feeding on are fleeing to the surface as fast as frightened minnows.

Clipped Quill

Instead of tying on one of my emerger patterns (sometimes I'm too eager to take the time to change flies) I snipped the top and bottom hackle from the dry Blue Quill I had been using. After holding the fly under the water to get it waterlogged so it would sink, I flipped the rod tip and the imitation landed cross-stream 20 feet away. With the rod held high, I stripped the line in while giving the rod tip small twitches. My offering disappeared beneath the water, and at a depth of five to 10 inches, began its own frantic swim.

The fly had moved only eight feet when a trout flashed from the current and jumped on the "emerging" Blue Quill. I brought the rod tip up to make sure the hook was set, but it wasn't necessary—usually when trout take a moving emerger, they take it for keeps. I sharpen each hook before I tie it on, and since I

The key to taking hard-to-figure-out trout on the emerger is simply to give the fly a try—with a twitching retrieve, or the natural drift in the film, whichever the situation dictates.

usually use barbless hooks, or clamp the barb down, the fish are easily hooked.

Kettle is not a large stream where I was fishing, and the pool we were in was small. With the commotion the 12-inch rainbow made on the surface while coming in, I wondered if the trout would stop feeding for a while—they didn't.

One trout after another attacked the little clipped quill. At times it seemed as if I were working a streamer—the action I gave the fly was much the same as I give a bugger, although I was working the emerger much slower and shallower. Several trout followed the fly briefly and made a wake behind the Quill before taking.

With nearly two hours of daylight left, I switched flies, using the emerger pattern with grizzly tail, gray muskrat fur body, and grizzly "feet" stabilizers. The fly was no longer a Quill, but the trout didn't care. Several more fish came to the net before I decided to see what else they would take.

I started with a wooly bugger and fished it every way but dry, and I couldn't buy a strike. I tied on two wets, a Hare's Ear and an Adams, and nothing showed any interest even though the feeding still continued. I did take one brownie on a dry Adams before switching back to the emerger. And the trout started attacking the fly again.





Undivided attention

Trout feed opportunistically. The available food that strikes their fancy, and is present in greatest abundance, usually gets their undivided attention. *Undivided* is an important word. Their instinct is to feed on a particular and abundant insect—and it is important to note, that this fly usually looks one certain way and acts in one certain manner when the hatch is on and the trout are taking. The fish sees a fly that gives the impression of the “right” shade, shape or silhouette, and action or movement, and the trout responds with a strike.

Action, I believe, is the most important aspect triggering the feed. If the shade and shape of the fly give the correct impression, the movement gives the fly its life and the final stimulus that triggers the trout to feed.

Shade and shape

When trout are sipping silent duns from a glassy surface, shade and shape become more important because of clear visibility and the amount of time the trout has between the stimulus of seeing the insect and the necessity to strike before the fly escapes. In the case of free-floating duns or spinners, we all know how important motion still is, especially if the trout expects the fly to float quietly with the current. Drag (or improper movement) on a single fly can put the whole pool off its feed. The converse is also true. If the fish expects movement, imitations must be given the proper motion to fool the trout consistently.

Beware when you start feeling confident about fishing emergers and working them at just the right action. The fish will start taking a different fly, with different emerging characteristics, at different speeds and depths. Emerging flies are as different as the currents and conditions in the stream.

Some flies are very strong “swimmers,” but most are at the mercy of the stream conditions when they are emerging. If they “hatch” in a riff and the current is high, they will be swept helpless well into the next pool before recovering. If they emerge in

lower water conditions and most of them swim to the surface in placid water, their pattern of emergence may appear very controlled and ordered.

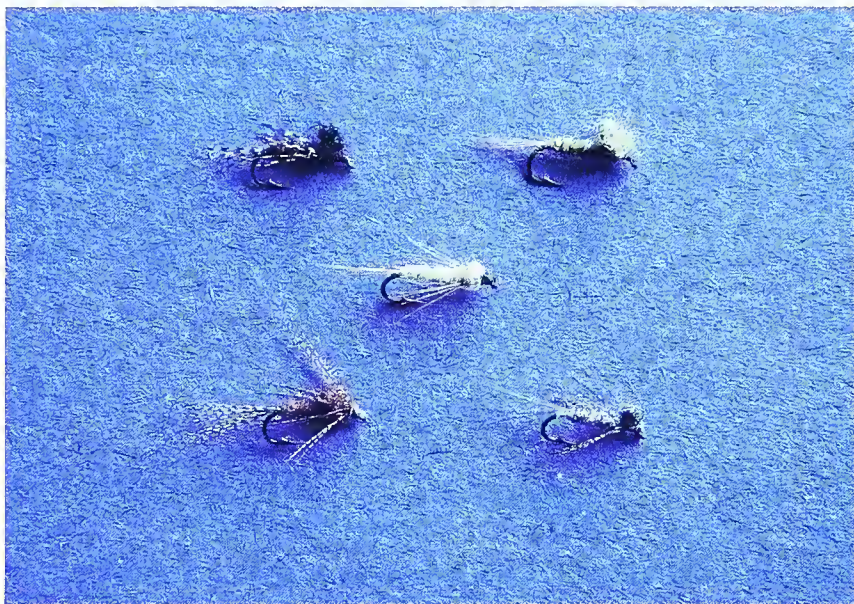
Thus, stream conditions and the area of emergence where the trout are feeding dictate the method of presentation the angler uses.

What works in a small area of a stream may not work just downstream. Trout that take swarms of emergers out of the fast current at the base of a riff will not be triggered by the same-appearing strike stimulator (emerging fly) as the fish taking flies rising to the surface at the slow foot of the pool. At times the trout will take the emerger just under the surface, in the film, as the insect struggles to break the surface tension and pop to the surface. Other emergers break from the bottom rocks, dash about in a swimming frenzy, and then end up on the bottom again before actually heading for the surface—in a sort of practice run for the real thing.

Emerging and still deep

When the flies are emerging and still deep, I use a rig of three wet flies. In this situation, you may see the trout flash deep as they take the flies when the insects first leave the bottom, or are still in the deeper currents of the creek. This is the best rig for this stage because the angler is generally broadcasting the imitations to the current and trout, as you would grass seed. The trout are low, and it takes a careful presentation throughout the likeliest feeding areas to find the fish, and have the fish find the offering.

As the trout take flies that are closer to the surface, it becomes more a strategy of fishing to particular trout, as you would a dry fly, because the trout’s feed is visible on the surface and you can therefore pinpoint your target fish. If the trout are swirling in a dash to grab the fly, they are probably taking an emerger that is moving quickly.



Action, I believe, is the most important aspect triggering the feed. If the shade and shape of the fly give the correct impression, the movement gives the fly its life and the final stimulus that triggers the trout to feed.

In a situation like this, I like to cast quartering upstream. This gives my unweighted emerger time to sink several inches after I give the fly a good twitch with the rod tip. By the time it is cross-stream in the position I prefer to begin my retrieve, there is no slack line and any strike usually produces a hooked fish.

This technique is used for trout chasing moving flies, so I fish this emerger a lot like I do a streamer, using the retrieve and the action of my rod to impart action to the fly, mimicking the movement of a struggling insect.

The technique rarely works with an upstream cast for me because the current is already moving the fly and the added speed makes it difficult for the trout to connect. Also, the current works against the retrieve and rod twitches, making it difficult to impart action to the fly.

Casting quartering downstream into slow-moving water does work. I give a little longer cast and allow the fly a little extra time to sink before the retrieve. When retrieving from a downstream cast, the fly can be worked slower because the tension of the taut line and current against the fly imparts a natural swinging action as the fly starts across the current. Every movement given the rod in this position translates to a movement in the imitation.

Fish hooked after casting downstream should be played very carefully because the trout can use the full force of the current against the angler. I've had hooks straighten from the weight of a downstream strike.

In the surface film

When the trout are taking emergers in the surface film, there is more of a slurp with the swirl—they tend to make a feeding noise because the fly is almost on the water. In this instance, the imitation should be presented drag-free, as you would most dry flies. You can cast quartering upstream, or downstream to present the fly, although a downstream cast lets the emerger get to the trout before the leader.

For this fishing I like a longer, lighter leader, nine feet tapered to 6X, and a longer rod to help keep the line off the water. The closer you can fish to the feeding trout, the easier it is to give the best drag-free presentation. Trout take this emerger in a swirling sip. When they do, you must set the hook as you would with a dry fly.

Pattern

I have a pattern for the emerger that is very easy to tie, and can be used for either the sub-surface swimming insects or for those free-floating in the surface film. To match the basic color of most of the hatching flies, the emerger should be tied in olive, black, yellow, brown and gray. The stream the angler plans on fishing and the major hatches it produces dictate the most important colors. The body can be fur, wool or manmade dubbing material. Thread should be 6/0 and the color should match the body material. Hook sizes should be mainly 14s and 16s although a few 12s, 18s and 20s are useful for various-sized insects.

To tie the emerger, secure the hook in the vise and tie on 6/0 thread and wood duck or other feather fibers to match the body color (I prefer wood duck or grizzly fibers). Wax the thread and twist on the dubbing for the body. Wrap the dubbing forward, forming the emerger body. Wax the thread again and dub on more body material. Hold the thread upright and work the dubbing material down the thread, forcing material into a ball. Take two wraps of the tying thread, securing the ball to the hook. On each side of the head tie in "feet" stabilizers (same fibers as the tail). Whip finish the head and complete with a drop of head cement.

Deeper swimmers

If the emergers are deeper swimmers, the fly can be used without dressing, and it will ride and attract well while you work it below the surface. If the trout are taking the emerger in the film, the small fur ball can be dressed with flotant, which keeps the insect with its head up and tail down, and in the surface water like the natural.

The key to taking hard-to-figure-out trout on the emerger is simply to give the fly a try—with a twitching retrieve, or the natural drift in the film, whichever the situation dictates. With a little observation of the water's surface and a touch of trial and error to determine what the fish's immediate preference is for presentation, the emerger unlocks another door to catching feeding trout.

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Cast and Caught



Conrad Howe, of Warren, earned a Senior Angler's Award for this nice brown trout. He was fishing a lure in the Allegheny River, Warren County, when the 6.16-pound, 25 1/2-inch fish struck. Nice job, Conrad!



Lancaster resident Frank Spleen, Jr., caught this albino channel catfish on a surface lure. He was fishing in Springton Reservoir when the 25 1/2-inch fish struck his lure.



Bill Rzodkiewicz, of Erie, was fishing Six Mile Creek in Erie County when this steelhead trout attacked his bait. The fish measured 28 inches long and weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces.



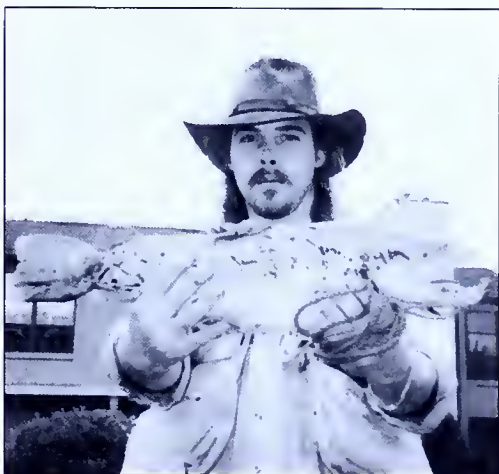
Frank J. Bauregger, of Erie, was fishing Walnut Creek in Erie County when this steelhead trout grabbed his bait. The fish weighed 9 pounds, 2 ounces and was 29 inches long.



Karl Ings caught this nice brown trout at Pine Creek Dam last October. The fish weighed four pounds, 1 1/2 ounces and was 21 3/4 inches long. Nice job, Karl!



Exeter resident Richard Stash fought this nice palomino trout for 20 minutes before landing it. The 20-inch fish weighed 4 1/4 pounds and was caught in Fishing Creek, Columbia County.



Paul Nicholas caught this nice brown trout while fishing in the East Branch of Brandywine Creek. The fish weighed 5 pounds, 5 ounces and was 23 3/4 inches long.



Raymond Napolitan, of Farrell, was fishing Lake Erie when this steelhead trout attacked his lure. The fish measured 25 inches long and weighed 8 pounds, 1 1/2 ounces.

Cast and Caught



Kurt Pittinger, of Montoursville, shows off a five-pound, one-ounce rainbow trout he caught last April with a worm. The action took place in Mill Creek, Lycoming County.



Nine-year-old Katie Maddalena, of New Columbia, caught these nice rainbow trout last November. The fish were taken out of Hunter's Lake, Sullivan County, and ranged in size from 14 to 16 inches. Great job, Katie!



Pittsburgh resident John Sember, Jr., used a jig to convince this steelhead trout to strike. The 12-pound, 6-ounce fish measured 31 1/4 inches long and was taken out of Elk Creek, Erie County. Great job, John!



Gene Kriberney III, of Pittsburgh, enticed this hefty steelhead trout with an egg sac. The 33 1/2-inch fish weighed 11 pounds, 8 ounces and was caught out of Elk Creek, Erie County. Nice job, Gene!



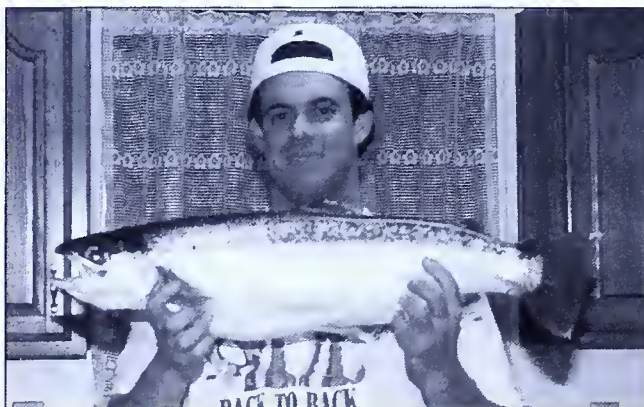
Thomas Lamp, of Kent, OH, used a jig-and-maggot combination to fool this nice steelhead trout. The fish, taken out of Crooked Creek, Erie County, weighed 9 pounds, 8 ounces, and was 27 1/2 inches long.



Jim Barton, of Cuddy, was fishing Elk Creek in Erie County last December when he caught these nice fish. He earned Senior Angler Awards for two of the brown trout—one weighing 7 pounds, 10 ounces and the other weighing 6 pounds, 5 ounces. He also caught two other brown trout and a steelhead the same day. Nice job, Jim!



Greensburg resident Michael Sanders caught this rainbow trout while fishing Upper Twin Lake in Westmoreland County. The fish weighed 5 pounds, 5 ounces and was 23 1/2 inches long.



Scott James, of Pittsburgh, was fishing an egg sac in Crooked Creek, Erie County, when this nice steelhead attacked his bait. The fish measured 28 1/2 inches and weighed 10 pounds, 11 ounces.

Cast and Caught



Derry resident Daniel Reese was fishing Keystone Lake, Westmoreland County, when this rainbow trout grabbed his lure. The fish was 25 1/2 inches long and weighed 5 pounds, 11 ounces. Nice job, Daniel!



This Elk Creek steelhead trout was caught last December by Ellwood City resident Denny Swarner. The fish measured 29 1/4 inches long and was 8 pounds, 13 ounces. Nice fish, Denny!



D. A. Neumann, of Coopersburg, caught this nice hybrid striped bass out of Lake Nockamixon. The fish, caught on a jig, weighed six pounds and was 22 inches long.

Perry Focht, of Blandon, used a nightcrawler to entice this sucker to strike. The Susquehanna River fish weighed 3 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 18 1/2 inches long.



Allison Park resident Thomas Steiger was fishing the Allegheny County section of the Allegheny River when this big walleye attacked his lure. The fish was 30 3/4 inches long and weighed 12 pounds, 12 ounces. Great job, Tom!

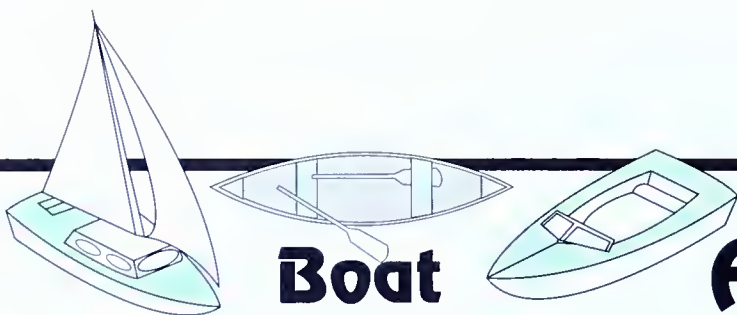


Three-year-old Francis "Frankie" McHenry, of Wilkes-Barre, caught this yellow perch through the ice using a tip-up baited with a shiner. The fish, caught at Francis E. Walter Dam, Luzerne County, weighed 1 pound, 8 ounces. Nice job, Frankie!

New Commissioner



Donald N. Lacy, Reading, has been appointed Commissioner with the Fish & Boat Commission. Lacy is chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Fish Committee and president of the Federation's Southeast Division, associate director of the Berks County Conservation District, and a committee member of the Youth Conservation Leadership School. He's also a past president of the Berks County Izaak Walton League and past secretary of the Leesport Gun Club, Inc. Lacy recently retired from the Metropolitan Edison Company after 40 years of service.



Boat AUCTION

On Saturday, April 10, 1993, the Fish & Boat Commission will hold an auction of used boats, motors, trailers and boating accessories at the Huntsdale Fish Culture Station, 195 Lebo Road, Carlisle, Cumberland County. A preview of the sale items will be held from 10 a.m. to noon. The auction begins at noon, and it will take place rain or shine.

The terms of sale include full payment in cash or by personal check. No credit cards will be accepted. There is a 10 percent buyer's premium for all sales, and six percent sales tax will be collected. All sales are final.

To receive a list of the items to be auctioned, please send a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Boat Auction, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Bureau of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Mulhollem*

If you enjoy fishing nymphs but don't know which patterns to use in April, ask the locals a few questions. If a stream has stoneflies, a Montana should work. If a stream has early-season mayflies, such a blue quills and quill gordons, a Pheasant Tail pattern should work. If there are lots of caddises, fish a caddis pupa pattern. If you can't find out, a Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear looks a little bit like most bugs a trout eats underwater. That fly has worked well for decades.

Many fishermen complain that they don't hook many fish that strike their wet flies. To reduce the number of "misses" on wets, when fishing downstream with a tight line, hold your rod tip up at a two o'clock position, rather than parallel to the water's surface. The slack created helps trout hook themselves.

Most wet flies are fished unweighted, and trout grab them near the surface. But during cold-water days with little insect activity and sluggish fish, a deeper-running fly is often better. So weight some of your wets. That also makes the upward swing of your flies more pronounced at the end of a drift, prompting more strikes. You can sink flies with splitshot, but if you use more than one wet and it is windy, splitshot cause leader tangles.

Many different kinds of strike indicators are available to fly fishermen who use nymphs—foam, cork, yarn, etc. But the best ones are inch-long sections of fluorescent fly line you can buy at most fly shops. You thread them on your leader. The ideal setup is to tie your own leaders and build two or three indicators in, using the leader knots to keep them separated. But you can put them on knotless leaders and then tie overhand knots just below the spots where you want the indicators to stay.

Early in the season, most anglers fish stocked streams. If you want to experience solitude, seek out a small mountain wild trout stream. Go with a good friend and carry just one rod, taking turns fishing the pools. Carry lunch in a small back pack. With bait, lures or flies, it should be a day to remember.

Carry a few different kinds of salmon eggs in different colors. Sometimes trout seem to want the pale, natural variety, sometimes they take the yellow cheese-flavored eggs, at times they like the pink shrimp-flavored eggs, and at other times they want the fluorescent-red ones. Carry a few different jars and experiment.

It's an enigma—you have to use plenty of weight to get your bait deep in spring flows where the trout are, but too often you get hung up and lose your bait and hook. Here's a way to make getting snagged less traumatic. Tie in a dropper of four inches or so, about 10 inches above your hook. Use line of a lighter test than the line on your reel. Squeeze your splitshot onto the dropper. If the weight gets snagged, you can break it off without losing your entire rig.

Oldtimers who fish for stocked rainbows in Commonwealth lakes have developed a rig that works well. It sounds silly, but they use two hooks, with a salmon egg on the point and a miniature marshmallow on the dropper. The marshmallow is buoyant and rises up off the bottom where the trout can see it. When the fish investigates, it has a choice between the egg and the sweeter treat. The small marshmallows come in a variety of colors, although white draws the most strikes.

On the Water

with Dave Wolf

Will the Young Follow?

The path before us is heavily trodden. Those who have gone before us have been transfixed by the lovely maiden we call a river, a stream, a brook—depending on your preference. Some put boundaries on what constitutes such waters, but it is an unnecessary argument. Trout anglers call such trout-holding waters whatever they choose—it adds meaning, perhaps even romance.

Consider, too, that the majority of anglers in the Keystone State fish for trout, according to the number of trout/salmon permits the Fish and Boat Commission sells annually. Do some unscientific weeding out of those who buy trout/salmon permits for collecting purposes, and the number of anglers making annual visits to trout water still exceeds 700,000. That's a lot of folks and not without reason, although the reasons are so varied that one must wonder why such a gathering exists.

Certainly literature has a lot to do with the popularity of the trout. My paltry library contains at least 100 books on trout, barely scratching the surface of the amount of such literature available. I won't even attempt to delve into the boxes of magazines in the closet, and most recently, a small collection of video tapes. I am not surprised that the average angler is drawn to the trout. Read the adjectives associated with trout: noble, magnificent, brilliant, educated, cunning, selective, jewels of the babbling brooks. No one has looked down his nose at trout or the fine art of angling, save those minuscule few who think something about fishing is unethical.

However, anglers have argued over species of trout. For example, brown trout were proclaimed to become the destroyers of native brook trout. And even today, most do not hold the rainbow and palomino in as high esteem as the brown trout. In fact, the brown trout is arguably the king of Commonwealth streams, brooks and even lakes.

So it would seem that trout fishing is safe and secure in Pennsylvania and across the nation. After all, Pennsylvania anglers are generally known throughout the country as proficient anglers who enjoy bountiful trout waters—waters duly studied and well-managed by Commission biologists. But the world is changing, and on a national scale, fishing is struggling to hold its own. Sport fishing is not drawing the fresh new faces in the numbers it once had.

Youngsters no longer are introduced at an early age, armed with a simple fishing rod retrieved from their grandfather's attic. Fine prints depicting the sport or Tonkin cane rods and well-machined reels are no longer waiting to be handed down in the numbers they were. Today, fishing seems to be competing with various activities that may not require as much time, such as

sports that offer instant gratification. But then again, we live in an entertainment-conscious world that seeks a wide variety of amusements and we bounce from one to another with no time to become proficient at any single one.

It has been reported that Americans have more leisure time now than at any other time in history. I have discussed this with many people, and not too surprisingly, most argue that they have less free time now than in the past. They point to couples trying to raise a family, trying to provide their children's wants and needs, and find a moment to spend time with their children and spouse. After all this, they still seek that golden time we're supposed to set aside for ourselves. Most will tell you that today both husband and wife need to work to make ends meet. Many couples work two or more jobs to purchase those little extras that make life a little more pleas-

ant. Add to this the sharing of household chores, a rather poor economy, and the rising costs of living and you will quickly see the problem that lies ahead of us.

The answers are not simple and I want my fishing to be an escape, a change of pace from everyday living. I want the trout waters of April to be a fresh breath of spring, and I want to capture cold, firm trout from waters still swollen by spring runoff. The most difficult questions I want to address are which pattern to use, what the water temperature is, and should my retrieve be slower or faster? But sometime around opening day, I want to think about that well-worn path weaving its way along trout waters and I want to think of those following in my footsteps, and of those I lead by my side.

Fishing has been a way of life for me, more important than many meetings or social functions I have attended. I think time on the water is important, deeply satisfying, and perhaps necessary for one's maintenance of sanity. Although I don't particularly care if others think the same, I simply want them to cast to the waters and capture in their own mind the meaning of pursuing April trout on cold, swollen waters.



ANGLER

Pennsylvania's Specially Regulated Trout Waters



Some Pennsylvania waterways feature year-round trout fishing with a variety of tackle, lure and bait requirements. If you're looking for a different kind of trout fishing experience than you find on approved trout water (stocked streams and lakes), check out these options.

- **Fly-fishing-only projects.** These areas are open to fishing year-round. The minimum trout size is nine inches. The daily creel limit is three trout, combined species, except from March 1 to opening day of the regular trout season, when no trout may be killed or possessed on these waters.
- **Delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only areas.** These areas are open to fishing year-round with a minimum trout size of nine inches. The daily creel limit is three trout, combined species, except from March 1 to June 14, when the daily limit is no trout.
- **No-harvest, fly-fishing-only areas.** On these areas there is year-round fishing, but no trout may be killed or possessed.
- **Delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only areas.** These waterways feature year-round fishing, and the minimum trout size is nine inches. The daily creel limit is the same as delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only areas.

- **Trophy trout projects.** These areas have year-round fishing, and the minimum trout size is 14 inches. The daily creel limit is two, except during the period March 1 to the opening day of the regular trout season, when no trout may be possessed or killed.
- **Catch-and-release areas.** These areas feature year-round fishing from an hour before sunrise to an hour after sunset. Artificial-lures-only rules apply. No trout may be possessed or killed.
- **Limestone springs wild trout water.** Regulations on these waterways are mostly the same as those for no-harvest, fly-fishing-only areas.

In addition to these areas, many other waterways with special regulations allow year-round trout fishing. This listing is only a brief look at our state's specially regulated trout fishing opportunities. For more complete information with locations and rules, consult the 1993 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*, especially the regulations on pages 14 through 31.

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Straight Talk

Trout Resource Management: 10 Years of Progress

As the 1993 trout season approaches and anglers young and old prepare their fishing gear for the adventures of a new season, we all need to be thankful for the many trout program improvements that have occurred over the past decade. These positive changes are major steps toward ensuring Pennsylvania's trout fishing heritage. The passage of new Clean Air legislation promises to lessen the effects of acid precipitation on our native trout streams. The Commission's recent acquisition of major springwater sources and the land along some of the state's most prized natural trout waters guarantees public use of these waters for future generations. The Adopt-a-Stream Program



Edward R. Miller, P.E.

*Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

has provided many coldwater habitat improvements and ensured many miles of public fishing opportunities. The continuous effort by fish culturists and cooperative nurseries to raise and stock adult trout has provided 10 years of increasing fishing opportunities for young and old alike. The increased use of delayed-harvest management areas throughout the state has extended the fishing season on more than 40 waters, increased the value and use of hatchery trout and helped meet the demand for more diverse fishing opportunities.

The Commission's efforts under the Operation FUTURE trout management program have more than doubled the list of premier trout waters throughout Pennsylvania since the early 1980s. This was accomplished under a management policy decision, made in 1982, that the best (Class A) natural reproducing trout streams should receive special management. The miles of streams that fall into this class of water have increased from 350 to 750 miles. Another 88 isolated wild trout streams have been designated by the Commission as the resource base for the Wilderness Trout Stream Program. This group of streams forms the core of the most protected, pristine watersheds in the Commonwealth.

All these beneficial natural resource changes and the continued stability of the adult trout stocking program have been supported and are sustained by the anglers who enjoy the diversity of fishing opportunities Pennsylvania waters offer. Their strong support for the agency's philosophy of putting the resource first and their trust in the Commission's ability to protect and manage the fishery resources of the state have enabled our dedicated staff to make some very positive changes in the last 10 years.

As we turn from looking at past accomplishments to planning our direction for the next decade, the commissioners and staff are keenly aware that the future progress of the agency depends on your continued financial and program support. Our effectiveness in balancing resource conservation with the expected future use

by the 1.5 million anglers who seek fishing opportunities in Pennsylvania waters will determine the progress we can make during the next decade and beyond.

This past year the Commission staff was involved with assessing your thoughts about the future of trout fishing in Pennsylvania. Other staff members were involved in a long-range planning effort to meet your needs and maintain agency commitments to protect the resource. The results of a statewide survey of 2,000 anglers indicated that the majority continues to enjoy fishing for stocked trout and also strongly supports agency efforts to offer a variety of wild trout fishing opportunities. Well over 80 percent of the trout anglers in the survey said they were from somewhat to very satisfied with both the wild trout and stocked trout fishing programs in Pennsylvania.

It is the Commission's policy to manage the state's top wild trout waters by eliminating the stocking of hatchery trout and emphasizing the ability of the natural population to support fishing. At times, this policy conflicts with past stocking practices. On the class A trout streams where this policy has been initiated, the natural reproducing trout have flourished and now offer significant fishing opportunities throughout the year. Not only does this practice permit better and more economical use of expensive hatchery trout, but it also has been shown that the self-sustaining fishery provided by a wild trout population results in long-term benefits to the local economy. As we work to increase the diversity of angling opportunities in Pennsylvania, your thoughts on how we can continue this policy and still meet the demand for stocked trout fishing are important to our planning effort.

While you contemplate the excitement of catching a lunker on opening day and perhaps anticipate the solitude of fishing some small mountain brook trout stream in mid-summer, let us know your opinions about our present management policy and your suggestions about how we can lessen the conflicts that arise when program changes occur.

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Pennsylvania ANGLER

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There's More than One Way to Catch Shad by Tom Fegely
These techniques, tried, true and new, take shad on the Delaware River.
Let them help you score more.....4

12 Tips to Becoming a Better Angler by Darl Black
Successful anglers have acquired a lot of skill and knowledge.
Here are 12 of their success secrets.....8

The Tri-Point Hendrickson Dun by Chauncy K. Lively
This pattern often heralds the season's first dry fly action.....12

1993 Expanded Trout Fishing Opportunities by Tom Greene
Check out this season's new waters, expansions to currently stocked
waters, management program changes, new Trophy Trout waters and
expanded delayed-harvest areas.....14

Ice-Out Crappies by Mike Bleech
Crappies seek warm water right after a waterway's ice breaks up.
Use these strategies to catch crappies early this season.....16

Western Pennsylvania's White Bass Action by Jeff Knapp
White bass are easy to catch, and in many waterways they are
overlooked. Here's the lowdown on how and where to cash in on white
bass opportunities.....20

Cold Weather, Hot Hatches by Charles R. Meck
Follow these ideas for an early start to your matching-the-hatch season.....24

On the Water with Dave Wolf
Before April's magical day.....31

The cover

This issue's front cover, photographed by Barry & Cathy Beck, shows Pennsylvania angler Bill Haldahan with a nice brown trout on a northcentral Pennsylvania stream. If you're planning for similar success this season, check out the articles on pages 12, 14 and 24. The article on page 12 shows step by step how to tie an early season dry fly. The article on page 14 explains the latest additions and changes to Pennsylvania's trout-stocked and specially regulated trout-fishing waterways. The article on page 24 shows how to cash in on early season dry fly action, which can be surprisingly productive. Sometime this month, if the weather and the river conditions cooperate, the first American shad of the season will be caught. If you want to be one of these successful shad anglers, please see page 4. Now is also the time to prepare for action with crappies and white bass, and the articles on pages 16 and 20 show you how and where to score. No matter which species you like to catch, the 12 ideas in the article on page 8 can help you be a better angler. In this issue is also this year's last chance to get a free copy of the 1993 Inseason Trout Stocking Schedule. For complete details, please turn to the back cover.

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There's More than One Way to Catch Shad



There's more than one way to catch a shad.

Every few years, it seems, someone hits on a new angling technique that catches on among the devoted Delaware River crowd, which holds court each spring on the stateline waterway.

Of course, this is a sport with tradition, even though its popularity has surged in the past few decades as water quality improved and the sea-run nomads were able to spawn successfully in the Penn-Jersey waterway.

Not all diehards are instant converts when someone hits it big on a newfound technique. But nothing is as convincing as success, and soon even the biggest pessimists are adding twists to their standard methods.

Casting from shore and drifting darts from the back of the boat have long been the *modus operandi* for hooking the silver-scaled fish, which return to the river each spring to spawn. And they're still quite productive when used properly. Nevertheless, enterprising anglers have devised new lures and spin-off techniques in recent years.

Here's a shad fishing primer of techniques tried, true and new that have caught on during Delaware springs.

Shore casting

"If you're not getting snagged you're not fishing properly."

That's the credo of shore anglers who bounce bottom throughout the season in a no-frills approach to the sport. The trick is tuning in to the proper channel, because shad are known to hug the bottom in their travels, particularly early in the season. That's where you've got to get the darts if you want to catch them.

The first order of business is either locating the channel and/or wading within casting distance of deep water. As the channel meanders between the New Jersey and Pennsylvania banks, some sites are better than others, as evidenced by the numbers of anglers who line the waters between Trenton and Narrowsburg, NY.

The typical gear is a medium light-action rod capable of accurately casting a light lure—such as a 1/16-ounce to 1/4-ounce dart. Rods of six to 7-1/2 feet are recommended. In the past few years some anglers have switched to noodle rods—the same outfits to cast or drift for salmon. Fitted with light reels to supply backbone while tussling with a soft-mouthed shad, the "whippy" rods offer strength without sacrificing the tender touch of a sensitive tip.

Six- or eight-pound-test line is most widely used, allowing sufficient strength to dislodge a snagged dart from the bottom while light enough to feel the bumps on a drifting jig.

Presenting the lure slightly upstream and across the current and lifting the rod regularly to control the dart as it's caught by the flow is standard procedure. Occasional twitches add enticement and keep the bait free-flowing. Most strikes occur as the dart reaches the end of its drift, where the flow eases. Retrieve with a steady wind, continuing to jerk the tip every few turns of the reel. At times a shad will follow the dart and often hookups are made in calm water.

Bank fishing, without getting your feet wet, is seldom productive because shoreline trees prevent long casts and at many locations it's impossible to reach the deeper water from shore.

In quiet pools a basic cast-and-retrieve method can be productive. Light darts that sink slowly are easiest to control. Begin retrieving as the dart hits the water, using a lifting motion with each turn of the reel. Dawn and dusk hours are most productive in such pools because shad are not believed to be night-migrants. They rest in quiet waters as dark approaches and begin their travels shortly after dawn. That's when casting darts into the resting places yields action.

Remember that the Delaware can be treacherous, particularly in the southern section, and anglers are forewarned that slippery rocks and abrupt dropoffs are the rule. Chest waders with felt soles are recommended. Wearing a life vest is also good insurance should you slip.

One other item that can save frustration is a wide-mouthed net. Shad are large fish and a small trout net just won't do—no matter if you're wading or operating from a boat.

Dead-sticking

Fishing from a boat holds a definite advantage over casting from shore. Numerous access sites from Trenton to the Delaware's New York waters offer the boat fisherman plenty of choices, beginning in Bucks County waters in late March and ending with some early June angling in Pike and Wayne counties.

The most widely used method is a "do-nothing" technique called dead-sticking. The dart is simply allowed to drift with the current five to 25 yards behind the anchored boat. Some anglers specifically position their boats to allow sway, which increases the range in which the suspended darts waver. Then it's a matter of sitting back and waiting for a strike.

Setting the hook isn't necessary or recommended. Shad strike hard out of territorial protection as it's their desire to drive off all "intruders"—even tiny shad darts. A sharp hook set or applying too much pressure during a fight may pull the dart free.

Daily experimentation dictates the depth at which a dart should be fished. Depending on water temperature, sunlight and the river's depth (which varies throughout the season), shad travel at various levels. Generally, the warmer the water the higher they swim. You control the dart depth by stripping out more line or adding weight about 18 inches above the lure. Experimentation is the key to finding the proper level, which may change quickly as the sun rises and the surface warms.

One item that can help you land your fish is a wide-mouthed net. Shad are large fish and a small trout net just won't do—whether you're wading or fishing from a boat.

The move to lighter (as small as 1/64-ounce) darts in the past decade demands the use of splitshot to get the lure deep, particularly early in the season. Another advantage in using weight is that debris such as leaves, algae and grass is short-stopped by the sinker while keeping the dart clean. Some anglers tie a rubber band on the weight a foot or two above the lure for the same purpose. Nevertheless, a dart that hasn't drawn action should be checked regularly.

Of course, the traditional red-and-white or yellow-and-white 3/8-ounce and 1/2-ounce bucktailed lures popular 40 years ago and more are still favored by many fishermen who prefer heavier jigs to adding lead weight to the line.

Experienced boat anglers also have several rod holders attached to the gunwale. Typically, two anglers each attend a pair of rods, which can provide mass confusion when a shad grabs a dart. By placing one rod in a holder and hand-holding the other, a partner can have time to reel in any lines that could become tangled as the fish is fought.

As with shore fishing, seeking the anchor points of other boats reveals the courses shad are taking. Boats often anchor in line over a wide channel or cross-water where a riffle smooths into a pool, while allowing sufficient space to keep darts from becoming snagged in one another's anchor ropes. If everyone else is catching fish and you're not, change locations.

The ends of riffles, edges where currents meet, and deep pools are hotspots. Make notes of the sites at which you've had success and try to anchor there again on your subsequent trips.

Trolling

Trolling has never caught on as one of the more popular shad fishing techniques, mainly because moving boats are seldom welcome in accessible pools where dozens of other boats are anchored.

However, trolling remains a viable method for covering lots of water and scoring on shad when everyone else is flustered.

There's nothing really complex about trolling for shad except in avoiding problems that may occur if you troll without paying attention to some basics.

Fish are caught on upriver runs. When riffles or shallow water block any further passage, boaters turn tail and motor downriver to begin another cycle. Again, knowing the location of the channel is important. A depthfinder aids in keeping the proper course, although it's not mandatory. In pools where trolling is popular, boaters often form a "parade line" as they follow one another up and down the river.

This isn't a speed sport. Instead, troll as slowly as your outboard allows. Most anglers hold onto their rods, although one or two can be placed in rod holders. When a fish strikes, the motor is cut and the fish is fought on a downriver drift. Some boaters prefer to anchor immediately (after motoring out of the channel where the progress of other trollers might be impeded) and complete the battle while stationary.

The basic rig is an in-line 1/8-ounce to 1/4-ounce trolling sinker placed about 18 inches above the dart. The line is spliced, then tied to the swivels at each end of the beaded sinker. This prevents line twist, which is inherent in dragging small jigs through the current.

Remember that trolling is a productive method for covering water and locating shad. But don't try it if too many anchored boats are in the vicinity.

Downrigging

This is the newest technique on the river with the first downriggers seen there only three or four years ago.

It must be clarified that downrigging for shad doesn't involve the traditional trolling method. Several years ago I wrote a newspaper column on the subject following a successful evening at Easton. Although I detailed the methods for anchoring and setting the rigs, one reader called a few days later and explained his problems with this revolutionary fishing method. He said that he'd trolled the baits and not only couldn't control their depths but lost over a dozen darts and spoons before going back to dead-sticking.

In retrospect, I should have said that the river's current takes the place of a moving boat.

Anyway, here's how it's done. (For more detailed information on this technique, see the March 1992 *Pennsylvania Angler*.)

Obviously, a downrigger is the basic tool although it's not necessary to invest in an expensive unit. A small hand-operated model is sufficient because the rig's weight is seldom lowered more than a dozen feet. Some anglers have fashioned home-made devices by shortening old saltwater rods, spooling steel line on an old boat reel and raising and lowering the ball by hand.

A critical item is the release, to which the fishing line is attached near the ball, which must be capable of being set lightly. Releases designed for big gamefish hold the line too tightly, resulting in breakoffs when a shad strikes.

The reel's drag must also be set lightly so the hook doesn't pull out on the shad's initial run. When the rod, placed in a holder, is removed, the drag tension must be cautiously adjusted to supply sufficient tension.

Forget the popular shad dart for downrigging (although some anglers use them with success). Instead, a small, narrow, multi-colored "flutter spoon" is the key to success. The light, flat-sided lure maintains the same level as the downrigger ball, allowing precise placement at the depth in which the shad are moving. The heavier darts may swim too deep, out of a moving school's range.

The mini-spoon is also inhaled more quickly when a shad bites. Indeed, the spoon is often swallowed, making a long hook remover necessary if the fish are to be released.

Flutter spoons were difficult to find when downrigging first became popular in 1991, but now most sporting goods stores and tackle shops within 50 miles of the river have them on hand.

It's not mandatory, but a depthfinder adds to the efficiency of downrigging. On an outing with Ron Bauer and Gary Conner last April, two anglers who helped introduce the method to Delaware River anglers, at the Lambertville/New Hope pool, the shad moved from 11 feet to eight feet over a four-hour period. We hooked 50 of them that day, many by adjusting the depth of the presentations when Conner's fishfinder showed they'd moved a bit closer to the surface.

A change of two or three feet in depth can make a tremendous difference in the catch rate. Then, too, the sonar unit allows proper boat positioning in the often elusive channel.

Downrigging is especially productive early in the season when the forerunners are scattered and deep. Even though most anglers don't get serious about the vernal sport until the first or second week of April, shad have been caught as early as the first week of March, and a growing number of anglers are satisfy-

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ing their itch to catch them by taking trial runs long before the start of trout season.

Drift and jig

As with trolling, the drift-and-jig technique cannot be used in just any sector of the river. In wide, deep pools with slow-moving current, however, this simple technique can be productive.

In this variation of trolling, the current carries both the boat and the dart. Shorter, stiffer rods are suggested because the lures are jigged near the boat. A five-foot rod with a sensitive tip allows better control of the bouncing bait.

Forget ultralight darts. Instead, use 1/4-ounce to 1/2-ounce darts for jigging. Lighter baits are naturally hindered by the moving boat and won't drop as deep as necessary.

An electric motor is seldom used for shad fishing, but with this method it serves well to control the boat's position.

On windy days stick with other techniques of shad-catching because a brisk April breeze can constantly blow a craft off course and create frustrating tangles and snags.

Shad anglers who are open-minded about their sport adapt any or all of these proven shad producers in a season's fishing. And if the trend holds, chances are someone will come up with yet another new way to hook these Delaware river "salmon" before the current season's out.

Who knows? Maybe it'll be you. 

photo: Tom Egely



Predictions

Last year's shad run was called "one of the best ever" by Delaware River biologists and predictions for another good run this year have been forecast.

Creel surveys, returns of tags from marked shad and catches in the nets of a commercial fishery operating at Lambertville, NJ, provided the basis for an estimate of 875,000 fish making the 1992 annual passage.

It was the highest number of migrants since 1975.

On the downside, fewer juvenile shad showed up in biologists' nets set out at Milford, Delaware Water Gap, Phillipsburg, NJ, Byram, NJ, and Trenton, NJ, last September, as the young of the year were making their ways downriver into Delaware Bay and eventually the Atlantic Ocean.

It's premature to forecast that the reduced number of shadlings will have a serious effect on future populations, but the 1993 migration is again expected to be excellent. Shad live at sea three to five years before returning to their birthplaces.—TF.

DRSFA Hotline



The Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association will again operate its 24-hour shad hotline. The free informational recordings are updated every few days during the prime run with specifics on hotspots, catch reports and river conditions.

Each year the lines field over 50,000 calls, attesting to the growing popularity of this eastern Pennsylvania sport. The hotline numbers are (215) 838-9777 or 838-9778.—TF.



12 TIPS to Becoming a Better Angler

by Darl Black



photo-Darl Black

Organizing lures and rigs makes it easier to find something quickly, and it lets you see at a glance which supplies are running low. A system of interchangeable stowaway boxes is better than cramming everything into a mammoth oversize tackle box.

Why do some anglers always catch more fish than others? It's not a matter of luck. Successful anglers have acquired considerable skill and knowledge. Included in their repertoire are procedures that have become second nature. All fishermen can improve their "luck" if they incorporate those automatic procedures that more experienced anglers use.

Here are 12 of those ideas.

1 Practice casting. About 10 years ago I worked briefly as a fishing guide. The biggest headaches involved clients who could not cast accurately or could not fish five minutes without getting a bird's nest in their reels. I attempted crash courses in casting with these people, but it often became too frustrating. At that point we switched to trolling, drifting or still-fishing, even if I knew that a casting presentation was more effective—anything to keep them from casting.

The average angler doesn't need to pluck a cigarette out of someone's mouth with a trick cast, but every angler should be able to execute practical casts for fishing situations. Learn to make both the standard overhead cast and the underhand quick cast. It is also useful to know how to pitch, flip and skip.

Avoid the sidearm cast. It is the least accurate cast, as well as the most dangerous to your companions. Unfortunately, it is one many beginners acquire by default because they did not have proper instruction.

2 Organize your tackle. Longtime friend Bob Hornstrom claims that if he goes fishing with everything organized and in its place, he never catches fish. But, if he's totally unprepared with lures scattered about and rods lying haphazardly in the boat, only then will he catch fish. Disorganization is his personal good luck charm.

Another buddy, Lee Duer, is very meticulous. All lures in his five tackle boxes lie in the same direction in the compartments. He even furnishes guest anglers with a small zip-lock bag for broken pieces of soft-plastic baits so they don't risk dropping anything on the carpet of his boat.

Both anglers are experts, and I would not attempt to change their habits (although I will continue to have some fun with them). But for most anglers there is a level of organization that enhances success—more than Bob uses, but less than Lee's.

Keeping rods and lures from underfoot is a sound safety practice, whether fishing from a boat or from shore. Everything should be stored when not in use. Yet, lures or an extra rod should be readily available to make a quick change without digging through boat compartments or the car trunk.

Organizing lures and rigs makes it easier to find something quickly, and it allows you at a glance to see which supplies are running low. The importance of inventory checks becomes apparent when you discover that a favorite worm color has been exhausted just when the bass are hitting nothing else.

The exact system of organization is a personal matter. I prefer a system of interchangeable stowaway boxes instead of cramming everything into a mammoth oversize tackle box. I can select the utility boxes needed for a particular trip and slip them into a carrier, thus avoiding taking excess tackle.

3 Replace your line often. The most important link between you and a fish is the line. Yes, you probably have heard it before, but it bears repeating. I frequently observe anglers attempting to cast with line so kinked that it will not spiral off the reel. Another common occurrence is someone snagging an expensive lure, and on the first tug to free the plug, breaking the line. Of course, the worst scenario is loss of a big fish when old line "pops" at the boat.



Strength, shock resistance, and castability are important characteristics of good line. However, these characteristics are gradually lost as line ages through use. Line loses castability when it takes a "set." It also loses strength when it's exposed to sunlight. And of course, there is wear and tear of line against underwater objects, as well as constant rubbing on rod guides.

Buy premium brand-name line, not unknown bargain lines. Purchase filler spools (typically 300 to 1,000 yards) rather than the small 50-yard to 100-yard spools. If you fish only once or twice a week, change line at least every six weeks during the fishing season by stripping off 50 yards and splicing in new line with a blood knot. Light line (under 10-pound test) should be changed every few outings.

4 Re-tie knots frequently. I am guilty of not re-tying a knot as often as I should. This is especially true when fishing is hot and taking 30 seconds to re-tie a knot seems like an eternity. I usually pay for my oversight.

Even correctly tied, a knot creates a potentially weak spot in the reel-to-lure connection. Heat generated during the cinching of a knot may weaken the line. Knots move up and down on the eye or line connector, causing the line to wear.

Furthermore, line immediately in front of the knot is subject to increased abrasion on cover. The type of habitat you fish usually determines how often you should check the line and re-tie the knot. The more wood, weeds and rocks, the more frequent the check—maybe as often as every few casts. Run line between your thumb and forefinger to check for abrasion or nicks, and pull on the lure to test the knot.

Some knots work better than others for specific purposes, so learn several. The knot I use about 85 percent of the time is the Universal or Uni-Knot. It is easy to learn and almost foolproof to tie, even in the dark.

5 Sharpen hooks. Actually, if ranking tips by importance, this might be number one. I never fish with a dull hook, and I spend more time sharpening hooks than on any other single aspect of fishing preparation. With few exceptions, new hooks are not sharp enough to achieve solid hookups consistently.

Don't believe all the hype on automatic hook sharpeners. Any battery-operated hook sharpener I have ever seen only creates a cone point on the very tip of the point. It does not sharpen the entire point. Nothing replaces a small file with ultra-fine teeth for creating the proper cutting edge on a hook. I use a file to stroke all cutting surfaces of the hook point. Then I fine-tune the tip with a battery operated sharpener because the file may leave a too-thin tip that could curl rather than penetrate. With hooks smaller than size 10, I use a quality machinist's sharpening stone rather than a file. Spray all hooks with WD-40 when done to help prevent oxidation.

There are exceptions. Cone or needle point hooks (Gamakatsu and Daiichi) should not be filed. On these use only hook sharpeners to touch up the conical point. Uniquely designed cutting points, such as Owner hooks, should not be sharpened with a file because you'll destroy the special point. However, most other hooks should be sharpened before first use. Check points frequently and touch up as needed.

6 Have a plan. Whether you're committed to writing or merely to making mental notes, every successful angler develops a game plan before hitting the water. Some plans may be very detailed. Tournament anglers often place precise time limits on each spot they fish to cover all the water they desire in the allotted time. They may even decide ahead of time how many casts are needed with one type of lure to work a spot effectively.

Plans need not be that elaborate. A plan may simply priori-

tize spots you intend to fish, and which lures or bait will be used. Perhaps on a bass outing, you may want to cast shallow weedbeds with topwater lures in the morning, then troll crankbaits along creek channels during midday. Or maybe if the morning walleye bite is slow, you have decided ahead of time to switch to crappies by afternoon. Your plan should also include backup spots in case the wind and waves prevent fishing first-choice areas.

If fishing an unfamiliar lake, part of the plan should be purchasing and reviewing a hydrographic map of the bottom to identify areas to fish. Another area of planning may involve setting aside a certain amount of time to learn or practice a new fishing technique.

7 Match lures and techniques to your rods. Consider the game of golf. No one expects to play the entire course with a single club. A golfer needs specific clubs for specific situations—a long-range driver, mid-range irons, plus different clubs for the sand trap, close-in chip shots and putting on the green.

Fishing rods must be viewed similarly. A rod's action and power are designed for specific weight lures and certain techniques.

This is not to suggest you need a dozen different rods to be successful. But any attempt to fish all lures and techniques with a single rod is doomed to fail. Recognize the limitations of your equipment. If the light-action spinning outfit you own does a dandy job with live bait, small spinners and twitching floating minnow plugs, that's great. But that rod is not going to work for fishing a weedless jig-and-pig in heavy cover for bass. The rod cannot effectively set the heavier hook of a flipping jig and haul a big fish out of cover. You'll come away frustrated.

As your angling interest grows and changes, and your pocketbook permits, purchase additional outfits to meet your needs.

8 Reduce terminal tackle. The strangest combination of terminal tackle I ever witnessed was snagged while trolling for walleye on Pymatuning Reservoir. It consisted of a six-inch wire leader, connected to a beaded chain sinker with a trailing monofilament leader to which a small directional diving device was tied; coming off the directional diver sinker was another monofilament leader with an in-line spinner and beads, which in turn was attached to a 12-inch wire leader, climaxing finally with a nightcrawler harness. I figured the angler made one trolling pass with this combination over an area and then went back through to pick up the fish that had rolled to the surface in uncontrollable laughter.

Here are some basic tips on terminal tackle use.

First, consider wire leaders. Never use them unless fishing specifically for pike or muskies. Wire leaders are not needed for walleyes. In 30 years of fishing, I have never had a wall-eye "bite" through my line.

Next, on most plugs, tie the line directly to a split ring. Some plugs that are not equipped with a split rig require a light-wire snap to achieve the best action. Use a snap swivel only on jigging spoons, spinners, revolving weedless spoons and other lures that twist line.

For live-bait fishing, always tie line directly to the hook, and do not use too much weight. Keep the presentation as natural as possible.

The rule of thumb for terminal accessories: Keep it simple and never add something unless it serves a specific purpose that benefits the presentation of the lure.

9 Vary the retrieve. Okay, you have practiced casting, put on fresh line, sharpened the hooks, and reduced your terminal tackle. But cast after cast after cast you retrieve the lure in the same manner without a strike. Perhaps it is the retrieve described in the lure's packaging. Maybe it's the retrieve you used last week to catch fish. Whatever the reason, don't get stuck in the rut of monotone retrieves.

Rarely is there just one retrieve for any one lure. Don't be afraid to experiment a little. Moods of fish change. Sometimes a fish is aggressive and will chase a fast-moving bait. At other times a fish is passive and will only take a bait dropped right in front of its nose. Either speeding up or slowing the retrieve may trigger a strike. This is true with almost any lure—from crankbaits to jigs.

Successful anglers frequently alter the speed and action of a lure during a single retrieve. Twitch, wake, buzz, burn, stall, stop, slow-roll, doodle, shake, etc.—remember that there is more to a retrieve than slow and fast.

10 Visualize what's underwater. Now you are entering the realm of conceptual angling. A lake bottom offers different configurations—flats, slopes, points, dropoffs, channels, stumps, brush piles, submerged vegetation and more. In addition to bottom changes and objects, current is another dimension at work in rivers and creeks. To work a lure or live bait effectively, the angler must imagine what a lure is doing under the surface.

Fish generally relate to structure, cover or current. Your lure or live bait must reach the fish's position to entice a strike.

Picture a plastic worm dragged along the bottom. Something snags the lure. Rather than angrily pulling the lure free and reeling in for another cast, realize that this object may be the spot a big bass calls home. Jiggle the lure—make it look very much alive. If you can gently pop it free, continue a seductive retrieve through the cover.

This is the kind of imagination that successful anglers use every day. Don't just cast and wind—visualize!

11 Be alert to your surroundings. Some fishermen may think this is simply observing what other anglers are doing. While that is a possibility, it's not what experienced anglers focus on.

There are other clues that may tip you off to fish locations. Gulls circling over a spot and diving into the water indicate a large school of baitfish. Gamefish may be shadowing these baitfish. Check it out with a quick-sinking lure that drops through the baitfish school.

A baitfish skipping across the surface could mean that a larger predator fish is chasing it. Immediately make a cast to the area with a lure that can be retrieved as a frantic, injured baitfish. Less obvious clues may foreshadow changes in fish activity. A shift in wind direction or intensity, or a gradual increase in cloud cover, often signals an approaching weather front that could trigger a feeding spree.

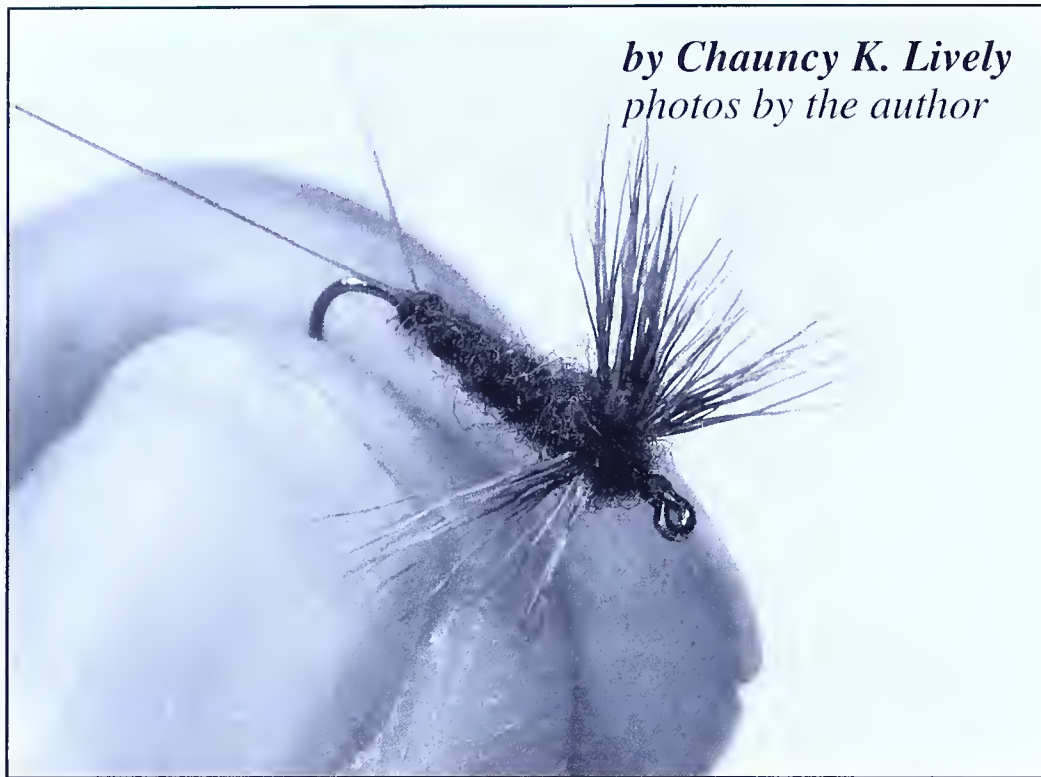
Be alert and observant to surroundings so you can take advantage of clues that nature provides.

12 Fish more often. Like the lottery where you gotta play to win—you gotta fish to catch. By fishing more often and practicing these tips, you can become a more successful angler.



The Tri-Point Hendrickson Dun

by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author



Ephemerella subvaria is a true harbinger of spring, often heralding the first dry fly fishing of the season. It is a mayfly eagerly anticipated by many anglers whose patience has been tested by the long winter. The sight of its tall, slate-colored wings gets the adrenalin flowing, and if the trout are surface feeding, how sweet it is!

Typical of many American mayflies, *E. subvaria* is referred to by the name of the dry fly representing it. Perhaps that's a case of the wagon pulling the horse, but many anglers shy away from Latin names and find familiar names more comfortable. If that makes for better communication, why not?

The Hendrickson pattern was first tied in 1916 by Roy Steenrod and named after A. C. Hendrickson, a Catskill angler of the Theodore Gordon era. Dressed in the classic Catskill style, it became a popular dry fly pattern on the freestone streams of the northeast U.S. There are other *subvaria* patterns in various parts of the country as well, some of which are purely of local interest, and still others are popular over a fairly broad area. An example of the latter is the Borchert, a pattern developed by and named after a well-



1 To prevent bending the long, fine shank, recess the bend of the hook in the vise, exposing only the forward half of the shank. Tie in the thread behind the eye. At a point one-fourth the shank length behind the eye, tie in a bundle of hair, tips forward, for an effective length equal to the shank length. Trim the butts on a bevel and wind over them.



2 Now re-seat the hook with the bend in the forward part of the jaws. Divide the hair into three parts with the dubbing needle and make criss-cross winds to extend a bunch out of each side. Make a loop of thread around the base of the middle bunch (still extending forward) and pull the bunch upright to form the wing.



3 Apply a generous bead of flexament to the base of the wing, allowing it to flow into the base of the legs. Repeat on the other side of the wing. Then wind the thread back to the bend and tie in four brown microfibers as tails, for an effective length equal to the overall hook length. Wind forward over the tail butts and back to the bend. Split the tails into two pairs and wind between them to maintain separation. Then wax three inches of thread next to the shank and apply a tapered dubbing.

known guide on the Au Sable River in Michigan.

Because the Hendrickson mayflies emerge in April or early May, depending on latitude, uncertain weather makes fishing an iffy proposition. I can remember years when spring came early in the Cumberland Valley and the Hendricksons had already come and gone when trout season opened. Then there were years when it snowed on opening day and although Hendricksons hatched profusely, the trout chose to hold close to the stream bottom in the extra-cold water. But when conditions are ideal and all the elements come together, fishing to the Hendrickson may be a superb experience and a highlight of the entire season.

The genus *Ephemerella* has been hailed by entomologists as "trout stream mayflies par excellence," and Dr. Justin Leonard brings all the duns of this genus together into the category of "Blue-Winged Olive Duns." All seem to favor streams with substantial gravel and/or rubble bottom areas, the kind of environment in which the nymphs thrive abundantly.

The Hendrickson's counterpart in the British Isles is *Ephemerella ignita*, known

there as the "Blue-Winged Olive," or simply the "BWO." It shares several characteristics with the Hendrickson, including mode of emergence, size and egg-laying habits. However, its span of emergence is considerably longer, often continuing from early summer through autumn. It also differs in the body color of the female dun, although this aspect may vary in both species.

In recent years, I have represented the Hendrickson dun with the tri-point style of dressing and it has been very successful. It follows the same basic procedures as the Tri-Point *Isonychia* Dun described in the September 1989 *Angler* and the Tri-Point Cahill Dun in the November 1990 issue.

A single bunch of fine- to medium-textured deer hair is separated into three parts to represent the pattern's legs and single upwing. This design eliminates the need for hackles and separate wing materials. The result is a most durable fly requiring little maintenance attention in use. The key to the correct shape of both the legs and the wing is the application of cement to the bases of these appendages and flattening the hair with smooth-jawed tweezers

or pliers before the cement has fully hardened. This enhances the pattern's floating qualities and its balance on the water.

I've become reluctant to try to describe the Hendrickson's body color because of the variation in specimens from diverse areas. I have seen female duns with ruddy brown bodies, while on other streams in the same general area they were a drab brown with a grayish cast. Then there are those showing a faint-olive wash over the brown, and still others with bodies of chocolate brown.

Entomologists tell us color is an unreliable key in the identification of mayflies, and the Hendrickson is a prime example. The best solution is to capture a few naturals on the streams you fish, examine them under a strong glass and dress your patterns accordingly. You may also wish to cover all bases by dressing the pattern in a variety of shades of brown.

ANGLER

When the trout feed on this mayfly, how sweet it is!



4 Wind the dubbed thread forward and make one turn in front of the wing. Then make criss-cross turns around the base of the legs and wing. Tie off the dubbing behind the eye, whip-finish, and cut the thread.

5 With smooth-jawed tweezers or pliers, squeeze the hair flat at the base of the legs and wing. Finally, apply head lacquer to finish the winds.



Dressing: Tri-Point Hendrickson Dun

Hook: Sizes 14 and 16, 2xl, 2xf (Mustad 94831 or Tiemco 5212).

Thread: Brown 6/0 prewaxed.

Wing and legs: Single bunch of moderately fine, gray or brown deerhair.

Tails: Four brown microfibbets, paired and divided.

Body: Dubbing of brown natural or synthetic fur.

1993 EXPANDED Trout Fishing Opportunities

by Tom Greene

New waters

Aylesworth Creek Lake, Lackawanna County. This 10-acre impoundment has been approved for stocking this year. A preseason and an inseason planting of brook trout will be made to provide additional angling opportunities in this area of the Commonwealth.

Little Mud Pond, Pike County. The addition of this 26-acre lake will provide expanded trout angling opportunities in northeastern Pennsylvania. Brook and brown trout will be planted on a preseason-only basis for 1993.

Jones Creek, Wayne County. A new 1.4-mile section of Jones Creek has been approved for the planting of catchable trout in 1993. Brown and rainbow trout will be planted for opening day.

Great Trough Creek, Huntingdon County. A 2.8-mile section from T-370 downstream to the pipeline crossing has been added to the catchable trout program for 1993. This water is scheduled to receive preseason and inseason plantings of brook and brown trout.

Wooden Bridge Creek, Fulton County. The addition of a 2.7-mile upper section from SR 4007 downstream to the Pennsylvania Turnpike bridge has been approved for stocking in 1993. Brook and brown trout will be planted for opening day.

The overall program will be increased on the following waters.

Slippery Rock Creek, Butler and Lawrence counties. A classification change on 14.0 miles of stream reflects an increase in human population density from rural to suburban.

Little Pine Creek, Lycoming County. A classification change was made for a 5.0-mile section of stream to account for a decrease in the amount of posted property.

Tunkhannock Creek, South Branch, Wyoming County. Some 2.5 miles return to the catchable trout program because of improved water quality associated with the completion of the Factoryville sewage treatment facility.

Turtle Creek, Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. Formerly stocked preseason only, an inseason stocking will be added to a 3.9-mile section in 1993.

Hidden Lake, Monroe County. An additional inseason planting will take place in 1993 for this 40-acre impoundment.

Lake Minisink, Pike County. Added as a new water on a preseason-only basis in 1992, this water will also receive an inseason planting in 1993.

Switzer Creek, Lehigh County. Stocked only preseason since its approval in 1991, a 3.5-mile section will also receive an inseason stocking for 1993.

Wallenpaupack Creek, West Branch, Lackawanna and Wayne counties. Resolution of access problems will allow inseason planting to commence on this water in 1993.

Little Muddy Creek, Lancaster County. The classification

changed on 3.5 miles of stream to reflect an increase in human population density from suburban to urban. An inseason planting will also be made in 1993.

Indian Run, Lancaster County. Formerly stocked preseason only, an inseason planting will be added for a 1.8-mile section in 1993.

Sugar Creek, Crawford and Venango counties. Resolution of access problems will provide an overall increase to the program for 1993.

Laurel Hill Lake, Somerset County. This 62-acre impoundment returns to the catchable trout program for 1993 because reconstruction activities to the dam have been completed.

Expansions to currently stocked waters

Stocking limits have been extended on the following waters for 1993 in conjunction with landowner cooperation.

Larrys Creek, Lycoming County.

Chester Creek, West Branch, Delaware County.

Tenmile Creek, Washington County.

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, on behalf of the angling public, expresses gratitude to the landowners providing these additional opportunities.

Changes from federal to state stocking program

Francis E. Walter Reservoir, 90 acres, Luzerne County. Previously maintained with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service plantings, the Commission assumes responsibility for this waterway beginning in 1993.

Management program changes

The following waters will have changes made to their programs to reflect alterations in management strategy.

Penns Creek, Centre County. Partly because of a Commission land acquisition, access has improved on a 7.7-mile stream section (from SR 0045 downstream to the confluence with Elk Creek). Formerly stocked preseason only, this section will receive preseason and inseason plantings in 1993.

Reinventory work conducted in 1991 and 1992 has verified that a 6.8-mile section of Penns Creek (from the confluence with Elk Creek downstream to the catch-and-release area) supports an outstanding Class A wild brown trout fishery. Stocking will be discontinued in this section in favor of wild trout management.

Logan Branch, Centre County. Recent assessments have confirmed that a section of Logan Branch from the Axemann Spring downstream 1.2 miles supports an excellent Class A wild brown trout fishery. The planting of hatchery trout will be terminated on this section and wild trout management will commence in 1993.

The 1.6-mile section of stream upstream of the Axemann Spring

will continue to be managed with the planting of hatchery trout. Under this strategy, catchable trout will be planted on a preseason-only basis and fall fingerling trout will be stocked annually.

Rock Run, Lycoming and Sullivan counties. Although no change in allocation strategy will occur, the stocked trout section on Rock Run has been moved downstream to reflect an area of much improved angler access.

New Trophy Trout waters

These areas allow artificial lures only and year-round angling. The size and creel limits are two trout permitted per day, minimum size of 14 inches, except from March 1 to the opening day.

Lackawanna River, Lackawanna County. Beginning last January 1, Trophy Trout regulations went into effect on a 2.8-mile section from White Oak Run downstream to the Constitution Avenue bridge (SR 1016) in Jessup. This large freestone stream supports an excellent population of wild brown trout.

Tunungwant Creek, East Branch, McKean County. A 3.0-mile section from Pigeon Run downstream to the Main Street Bridge in Lewis Run has been approved for Trophy Trout management. Located within aesthetically pleasing surroundings, this stream offers an outstanding population of wild brown trout.

Expanded delayed-harvest areas

Deer Creek, Allegheny County (depending on action at January 1993 Commission meeting). A 0.5-mile stretch has been added to the existing area to encompass 2.1 miles from the SR 0910 bridge at the intersection of T-678 downstream to the Lower Rose Ridge golf course boundary.

Early warning waters, 1993

Brush Creek, Fulton County. Stocking will be terminated on a 2.9-mile section because of continued problems with angler access. Before 1993, stocking had been limited to preseason only.

Straight Creek, South Fork, Elk County. Road access no longer exists for the stocking of this water because of an unsafe bridge crossing leading into the stream. Stocking had been limited to preseason only and will be discontinued on this 2.2-mile section of stream. However, this water supports a viable wild brook trout fishery that should benefit from the cessation of stocking.

Big Moores Run, Potter County. Stocking will be discontinued on a 2.3-mile section in favor of wild trout management.

Leslie Run, Carbon County. Limited angler access because of an excessive amount of posting precludes the continuation of catchable trout management on a 2.3-mile section.

Mud Run, Carbon County. Reinventory work conducted in 1991 and 1992 has confirmed that Mud Run supports an excellent Class A wild brown trout fishery. The planting of hatchery



trout will be discontinued on this 2.5-mile section of stream, and in 1993, management will be directed toward wild trout under the fly-fishing-only program.

Birch Run, Chester County. The construction of Birch Run Reservoir preempts the planting of catchable trout on a 4.2-mile stream stretch. Before 1993, only preseason stocking was conducted.

Muddy Creek, York County. An increased amount of posting has led to the termination of catchable trout management on a 1.4-mile section. Previous stocking had been limited to preseason only.

Laurel Run, Perry County. Chronic problems with stream acidification and subsequent declines in water quality have led to the removal of a 10-mile stretch from the catchable trout program. Formerly stocked inseason only because of water

quality, 1992 field examinations indicated that stream pH did not exceed 6.0 even during the month of June.

Shaeffer Run, Perry County. Recent assessments have confirmed that a 3.8-mile section supports an excellent Class A wild brook trout fishery. Stocking on this section will be discontinued and management will change to the wild trout waters program. A total of 2.8 miles of this stream will continue to be stocked.

Lost Creek, Juniata County. A 4.7-mile section from SR 0235 downstream to the SR 0035 bridge at Oakland Mills has qualified for Class A wild trout management. A total of 8.3 miles of this stream will continue to be stocked.

Tunungwant Creek, East Branch, McKean County. The lower 1.6-mile portion of the stocked section has qualified for Class A wild trout management. This segment will be incorporated into the new Trophy Trout area. A total of 2.8 miles will continue to be stocked on a preseason-only basis.

Loss of angling opportunities

The following waters will receive a reduced allocation in 1993 because of an increase in the amount of posting. Quite often, posting and the loss of angling opportunity are caused by land-owner-angler conflicts, which are caused by poor angler behavior. We would like to remind all anglers that proper angler conduct should be observed at all times when visiting waterways to ensure that the privilege of angling continues.

Bald Eagle Creek, York County.

Cole Creek, South Branch, McKean County.

Elk Creek, East Branch, Chester County.

Sutton Creek, Luzerne County.

Little Chickies Creek, Lancaster County.

Muddy Creek, South Branch, York County.

Wooden Bridge Creek (lower section), Fulton County.





by Mike Bleech

Sheets of ice floated at the outer end of the cove, but in the back of the cove the water was open and already had warmed to the high 30s. Two drake mallards were courting a hen in front of me, right where I figured some crappies might be hiding under a sunken log. The drakes chased the hen, bobbing their heads, and they chased each other with necks low and outstretched. They caused such a stir I was afraid they would spook any crappies that might be in the cove. Anyway, I could not cast my jig and bobber with them in the way. The last thing I wanted was to get my line tangled on a duck.

My fishing partner, Dave Baker, had gone to the other side of the narrow cove. While I was watching the melodrama of the ducks of our lives, Dave was putting together a nice string of crappies. Each time his bobber passed over the log that stretched between us in the water, a crappie would inhale the jig that hung beneath it, dipping the bobber under water. About half the time Dave would sink the hook and haul in another 12-inch crappie.

Early season success is based on one of the most reliable fishing patterns—the tendency of crappies to seek warm water right after ice-out.



photos- Mike Bleech

Never let it be said that I stood in the way of waterfowl love. Yet eventually I shared in the good fishing.

The success of that early spring fishing outing was predictable. It was based on one of the most reliable fishing patterns I am aware of—the tendency of crappies to seek warm water immediately following the ice breakup. Or where there was no ice to break up, this pattern begins with the upward curve of the annual water temperature cycle.

Warm water

The first step to using this fishing pattern is understanding the basis, the attraction of warmer water. Though the crappies might not care about our concept of comfort in the warmer water—then again, they might—they do care about food. The food chain accelerates as water warms during spring. Plankton multiplies, insect activity increases, and small fish congregate to feed in

the warmer water. This means that, generally, there is more for crappies to eat in the warmer water.

The next step is locating the warmer water. It is a complex search. I can offer just a few good clues. Here is where your skill as an investigator can help make you a very successful angler. Most anglers locate crappies by finding other anglers catching them. If you go to the trouble of locating crappies on your own, the odds are strong that other anglers will see you and share in the rewards of your efforts. For me, a big part of the joy of fishing is the satisfaction I feel when I find my own fish. Play it any way you want.

Figuring where water warms fastest is a lesson in physics.

Loosely speaking, water gains heat by capturing it from the sun. Winter turns to spring because the sun's rays are striking our area more directly. Water warms slower than the land because it reflects more of the sun's rays. The water that reflects less warms faster.

Shallow water warms faster than deeper water. Water with a soft, dark bottom warms faster than that with a hard, light bottom. Colored water warms faster than clear water.

A popular notion among anglers, one which I am guilty of repeating, is that the north side of a lake warms faster than the south side. Though this might have some basis in fact, I have not found it to be true.

Water warms fastest near the surface. Steady breezes push the warmer surface water against the windward shoreline. Shallow, wide-mouthed bays on the windward side of a lake are usually the warmest parts of a lake, particularly if that is the prevailing wind.

In rivers and large creeks, the warmest water is typically in shallow coves. Here the water does not flow, at least not much. It is usually shallow, and the bottom is often soft and dark. Sometimes these coves are tributary mouths. If the tributary is warmer than the river it feeds, then it might hold crappies. But the better coves I have found are dead-end coves.



Crappies use just about anything for cover. Brush piles, docks, logs, stumps, boat houses and boulders are some common forms of early spring crappie cover.



Current

Water temperature is not the only variable affecting early spring crappie location. In the opening example, the cove where Dave and I fished probably held crappies as much because they were there to get out of the current as for the warmer water. During spring, river and creek flows are characteristically high. This increases the current, and minimizes the places where there is no current. Crappies are not much for current anytime, but particularly so in cold water when their metabolism can not stand the energy consumption of fighting current.

Few of our rivers and creeks are noted for great crappie fishing. The primary reason is that crappies are not current-oriented fish. Nonetheless, many rivers and creeks hold some crappies. About the only time crappie fishing amounts to much there is during the spring high flows. When most of the crappies get pushed into the coves, they seem abundant. They aren't...it is just the predictability of this fishing pattern.

Within any hospitable bay, cove, or any other area you have identified as a high potential crappie area, there usually are specific, identifiable places where the crappies congregate. These places can be grouped under the headings of cover or structure.

Cover

Crappies use just about anything for cover. At the Conowingo Pool we found them near rocky ledges. At Presque Isle we lured them from beneath house boats. At Glendale Lake they congregated around weed clumps. At the Allegheny Reservoir they hid among the branches of fallen trees. Brush piles, docks, logs, stumps, boat houses and boulders are some other common forms of early spring crappie cover.

When most anglers on the lake are catching crappies, the crappies are usually on the move. But when most anglers are having poor luck, the reason is often that the crappies are holding tight to cover. They might still be quite catchable, though. The trick is getting your lures or baits right in front of their noses. This might mean flipping under docks, or dangling a minnow among the limbs of a fallen tree, and it almost always means a few snags.

This point deserves repeating. I have seen many situations in which a jig fished tight to a piece of cover catches crappies, but if the jig were fished two feet from the cover you would never know there were any crappies in the vicinity.

Do not be fooled by the cooperative nature of fish on those days when the fishing is fast and furious. Fish do not behave the same way from one day to the next—maybe not from one hour to the next. Fishing can still be very productive during the times when most anglers are having trouble catching fish. Often it is the little things that make a big difference—two inches from a log instead of two feet, four-pound line instead of six-pound, a translucent chartreuse jig instead of opaque chartreuse—little things often make the difference between a great day and a dull day.

Of course, fishing tight to cover often means a lot of snags. One way to deal with snaggy fishing conditions is to use fine-wire hooks and line strong enough to straighten the hooks. But the stout line greatly reduces hits in clear water. You have to decide whether you would rather sacrifice jigs or hits.

Structure

Structure also plays a noteworthy part in early spring crappie location, though to a lesser degree than cover or temperature (except that in some cases structure is cover).

Considering only structure that is not obvious cover, I am not sure that the structure really means much to crappies. However, it is useful as a means of identifying crappie location. Here is what I mean.

Worth Hammond, one of my regular fishing partners, and I had located big crappies on a long flat at the windward end of a large, shallow bay. The flat is about a mile long. The crappies were bunched up among scattered clumps of weeds. Only certain clumps of weeds held cooperative, big crappies, but fishing from an anchored position did not produce good results. We found that our best results came while drifting with the mild breeze. This wasted a lot of time, though, while we drifted through unproductive areas.

The problem was concentrating our drifts in the most productive area. From the surface, all that water looked the same. We finally were able to identify the best area with the sonar. The most productive area was a barely discernable depression in the flat. Most of the flat was six to 6 1/2 feet deep. The area where we caught the most crappies was seven to 7 1/2 feet deep. By using the sonar to stay over the depression, we were able to stay in the best water.

We could have put out marker buoys to identify the productive water. However, those marker buoys would have clued many other anglers in to our hotspot. Then a few things would have happened, none of them to our benefit. First, we might have been crowded away from the crappies we located. Second, boats would have anchored between our markers, making it difficult for us to drift. Third, crappies are skittish in cold water. Heavy boat activity would either chase them from the area or put them off the bite.

Precise location is the key to early spring crappie fishing. The crappies seldom come to you. You must find them. When you do, you are liable to have fast action. It is a great way to begin the open-water fishing season.

ANGLER

Finicky Fish

The three of us in the boat were all catching crappies, but there was a difference. I was catching jumbo crappies on nearly every cast. My partners were just catching a few small crappies. This did not go on for long before they demanded to know my secret.

We were all using the same yellow marabou jigs, flavored with a drop of scent, fished two feet beneath small floats. We were casting to the same water. There was no difference in the way we worked the jigs. We just let the waves do the work.

The difference, I suggested, was my line. I was using a premium, low-visibility green, four-pound-test line. They were both using eight-pound line.

"I've caught plenty of crappies on eight-pound line," one of my companions argued. "That can't be the difference."

For my other friend, I broke off about 10 feet of my four-pound line, which she tied to the end of her line as a leader. On her first cast, she boated a 14-inch crappie.

"Then again, why argue with success?" The argumentative partner finally conceded after the more adaptable partner had put eight or 10 slabs in her fish basket.

This tale does not have an entirely happy ending. Before the reluctant angler rigged with the four-pound leader, the action stopped for the remainder of the afternoon. This might have been the most important lesson of the experience. Nature does not wait. Think and act quickly—then you win quite often. Argue with the obvious and you end up begging fillets from your more adaptable friends.

Though anglers should think and act quickly, life moves relatively slowly in cold water, especially if the water is clear. Crappies have plenty of time to look at your lure or bait. If it does not look right, they won't try to eat it.

I use a jig and bait or scent combination for nearly all early spring crappie fishing. This setup gives me a great deal of versatility without complication. I carry several, make that dozens, of different colors and shapes of plastic jig bodies, and two or three sizes of lead heads. The jig body colors should include chartreuse, white, smoke/glitter, and as many others as you like. Jig head sizes should include 1/32-ounce and 1/16-ounce. I almost always flavor my jigs with either scent, maggots or small minnows.

Much of the time I fish the jig beneath a float. This keeps the jig at the desired depth throughout the retrieve. Or when there is a chop on the water, I cast the jig where I want it and then let the chop give the jig its action, essentially still-fishing.

If you have only one fishing rod and reel, and you do not want to go to the expense of putting four-pound line on your reel just for crappie fishing, then you can use a four-pound leader beneath the float. The only place that four-pound line matters is close to the jig.

The terminal end of your fishing outfit is the most important part. Give the crappies what they want on light line and your chances of success increase.—MB.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA'S WHITE BASS ACTION



THERE ARE LOCAL POCKETS OF POPULARITY, BUT WHITE BASS AREN'T
OFTEN THE TARGET OF ANGLING ATTENTION. THIS IS UNFORTUNATE
BECAUSE THE SPECIES PACKS PLENTY OF POTENTIAL FOR FUN FISHING.

Fishing means various things to different people, but there's one common thread that tends to bind all anglers. We like action. Hey, I enjoy catching big fish as much as the next person, but even when the going is slow, I still want something pulling my line—the more often, the better.

White bass are more than willing to fulfill this “action” prerequisite. They have an endearing quality: They're easy to catch, and they have saved more than one fishing trip for me.

Consider a trip I made last year to the Ohio River. My frequent fishing companion Dave Keith and I were on the Montgomery Pool. It was early summer, and the river's healthy black bass population was our target.

The Ohio River has some interesting fishing holes. One is the remnants of an old lock and dam system. The dam had long since been dismantled and replaced by a gated dam miles downriver. Part of the old structure remains, with one wall forming a side-channel off the main river. This channel was boiling with fish activity.

Dave and I were both aware of the Ohio's good white bass population, so we weren't surprised when these fish slammed our lures. We customized our presentations by putting on small straight-shaft spinners. We caught a dozen fat white bass up to 12 inches long before the frenzy subsided.

We had similar flurries of white bass action throughout the day at various spots along the Montgomery Pool. When the whites were up, it was like sight-fishing for striped bass, only on a smaller scale.

White bass—like striped bass—are members of the true bass family. They are schooling fish, known for being prolific, and engaging in surface-feeding activity. White bass are widely distributed on a national scale, and they are popular in many large southern impoundments.

In western Pennsylvania, the white bass can't accurately be described as “widespread.” However, we do have enough lakes and large rivers with whites to make them an important addition to our potpourri of sportfish. In many cases, the fishery is overlooked, and white bass catches are incidental ones when the anglers were targeting other species.

The fishery

Western Pennsylvania's white bass fishery is ever-changing. Some traditional white bass hotspots, such as Pymatuning Reservoir, recently have been on the decline, at least when compared to the action 10 years ago. Others are on the upswing, furnishing good, yet often overlooked and unappreciated, angling.

The fish themselves mature quickly. Three years is the average lifespan for a white bass. If the forage base is adequate, they can attain a good size during this time. Conversely, if less food is available, the waterway's white bass are on the small side.

There are local pockets of popularity, but white bass aren't often the target of angling attention, at least not in western Pennsylvania. This is unfortunate, because the species packs plenty of potential in the way of fun fishing. The attention white bass do receive usually occurs during the spawning season—around mid- to late April, depending on the weather and physical characteristics of the particular waterway.

From a management prospective, most of the white bass found in western Pennsylvania waters occur naturally. Some stocking does take place, though the frequency fluctuates. Penn-

sylvania does not raise white bass, and must rely on the supply of other states.

Hotspots

• **Pymatuning Reservoir.** If there's a place in western Pennsylvania where white bass fishing is popular, it would have to be Crawford County's Pymatuning Reservoir.

Traditionally, lantern-bearing spring anglers have lined the rocky banks of the Espyville-Andover Causeway at night seeking white bass. The action begins around the end of April.

Local fishing authorities concur that the Pymatuning's white bass fishing is on a downward trip on the fishing cycle. No concrete reason has been found for this, and this is not to say that populations couldn't turn themselves around. The fishing may not be as easy as it once was, but white bass still furnish a viable springtime fishery.

CONNEAUT LAKE PRODUCES SOME JUMBO-SIZED WHITE BASS. THE LAST TWO STATE RECORDS CAME FROM THIS WATERWAY.

Later in the spring, it's possible to catch schooling white bass near the surface. Two years ago my sons Michael and Jason and I had a memorable experience when we bumped into such a school of whites corralling baitfish into the corner of a point just south of the causeway. Their feeding activity gave them away, and they eagerly jumped on minnow-shaped crankbaits.

Pymatuning's white bass population is self-sustaining. Expect to catch fish in the 10-inch to 12-inch range.

• **Conneaut Lake.** Even though Conneaut's white bass population is sporadic, the lake produces some jumbo-sized white bass. The last two state records came from this water.

Thomas Jones of Meadville held the record from 1987 to 1990 with a three-pound, eight-ounce white bass that stretched the tape to 20 inches. According to Jones, he threw back several whites of nearly the same size before someone told him he was probably releasing record fish. Jones returned to his Conneaut white bass hotspot—located in 25 feet of water off the edge of a weed-lined bar—and caught his state record fish.

The current record also came from Conneaut Lake—a three-pound, 12-ounce fish caught in 1990 by Jerry Swidzinski of Butler.

Conneaut's white bass action tends to get going later in the year than Pymatuning's. Savvy anglers who locate summer schools of white bass often find that the fish frequent the same general area the rest of the season.

Conneaut's white bass numbers come from stocking. Voids in stocking can occur, because the fish must be obtained from other states via trading. White bass are stocked at Conneaut about every two or three years.

• **Canadohta Lake.** Consider this lake as a possible sleeper. At 170 acres, Canadohta Lake (a natural lake), also in Crawford County, received an initial stocking of white bass four years

AT CERTAIN TIMES WHITE BASS SEEM TO BE EVERYWHERE ON THE OHIO RIVER. TRY THE MONTGOMERY POOL FOR THE BEST FISHING.

ago. Not much has been reported to the Fish and Boat Commission (positive or negative) since that stocking, so this waterway represents a possible new white bass fishery.

- **Shenango Lake.** Springtime white bass fishing is popular at Shenango Lake, with the most intense action taking place during the spawn in the headwaters of the Shenango River arm.

Like Pymatuning, night fishing is the accepted tactic at Shenango. The white bass fishery is self-sustaining. The lake covers 3,500 acres, and is located in Mercer County.

- **Allegheny Reservoir.** The white bass report from Allegheny Reservoir—more commonly known as Kinzua Lake—is good: Lots of white bass, with some of the fish reaching 15 to 16 inches. Kinzua isn't stocked. The white bass found in this 12,000-acre lake occur naturally.

It's hard to supply many details on Kinzua's white bass because few anglers target the fishery. Perhaps that will change as more anglers learn about it. One general trend seems to suggest that better white bass catches are made in the upper portion of the lake (New York waters).

The tailwaters of Kinzua Dam also furnish a productive white bass fishery, though the fish tend to run smaller—averaging nine to 10 inches. It is unknown if the fish pass through Kinzua Dam or “run” to the tailwaters from the Allegheny River.

- **Allegheny River.** The middle and lower Allegheny River, from the Kinzua Lake tailwaters to Pittsburgh, has white bass, with a few specific hotspots.

On the free-flowing (middle) Allegheny, one of the popular white bass areas is in Warren, where a power plant discharges warm water into the river.

White bass show up throughout the navigable (lower) portion of the river. I've experienced especially good white bass catches on pools 5 and 6. On Pool 6, several good holes are located within the river section near the mouth of Crooked Creek. There are two large islands located there, as well as several offshore humps. The deep holes next to these islands and humps often hold white bass.

Pool 5, which is downriver, also has good white bass fishing. One of the better spots is the large, deep hole immediately below the sandbar formed at the mouth of Taylor Run.

I've found the white bass in pools 5 and 6 to be big. My partners and I have caught many fish in the 15-inch range, with the average 12 to 13 inches.

All of the Allegheny River white bass are the result of natural reproduction.

- **Loyalhanna Lake Tailrace.** White bass “run” up to this area—via the Kiskiminetas River—from the Allegheny River. A study of Loyalhanna's tailrace basin last year revealed that over 50 percent of the fish there were white bass. This is a fall-through-spring fishery.

- **Crooked Creek Lake Tailrace.** The same scenario as

Loyalhanna occurs here. It's only about an eight-mile run from the Allegheny up to Crooked Creek Dam, and white bass make up a portion of the numerous gamefish species found in this tailrace.

- **Monongahela River.** The Mon River's diversity differs from that of the Allegheny. The Allegheny has many more defined holes, many island areas and an abundance of sand/gravel bars.

Because of its relative lack of fish-holding habitat, the Mon's navigational dams tend to provide the best fishing spot. Expect to find some white bass in all of the tailrace areas of the river.

I've done well on white bass in the Maxwell Dam area, located a few miles upriver of Brownsville. The Braddock Lock & Dam also has plentiful numbers of whites.

Warmwater discharges also concentrate Mon River white bass during the late-winter to early spring period.

- **Ohio River.** Much the same situation exists on the Ohio as the Mon. Lots of white bass are present in the tailwaters of the three dams found in Pennsylvania. I've also found them in most of the deep holes near sand/gravel bars formed at tributary mouths, particularly when the water is cold.

During the summer, white bass can be caught on the surface while engaged in obvious feeding forays. They roam open water, but the feeding takes place near structure, in areas where the whites can herd baitfish.

Fact is, white bass at certain times seem to be everywhere on the Ohio. Anglers targeting other species—bass, walleyes and saugers—often have trouble getting away from the whites. The fish average nine to 10 inches.

Most anglers think the Montgomery Pool has the best overall fishing, and this includes white bass fishing.

- **Beaver River.** The Beaver River white bass fishery is an extension of that found on the Ohio River. The Beaver enters the Ohio in the Montgomery Pool near Rochester. It is navigable for three miles up to an old lock and dam. White bass are most abundant here, particularly in the spring.

Tactics

White bass aren't timid biters, so the methods used to catch them are relatively simple. The key to catching white bass is finding them.

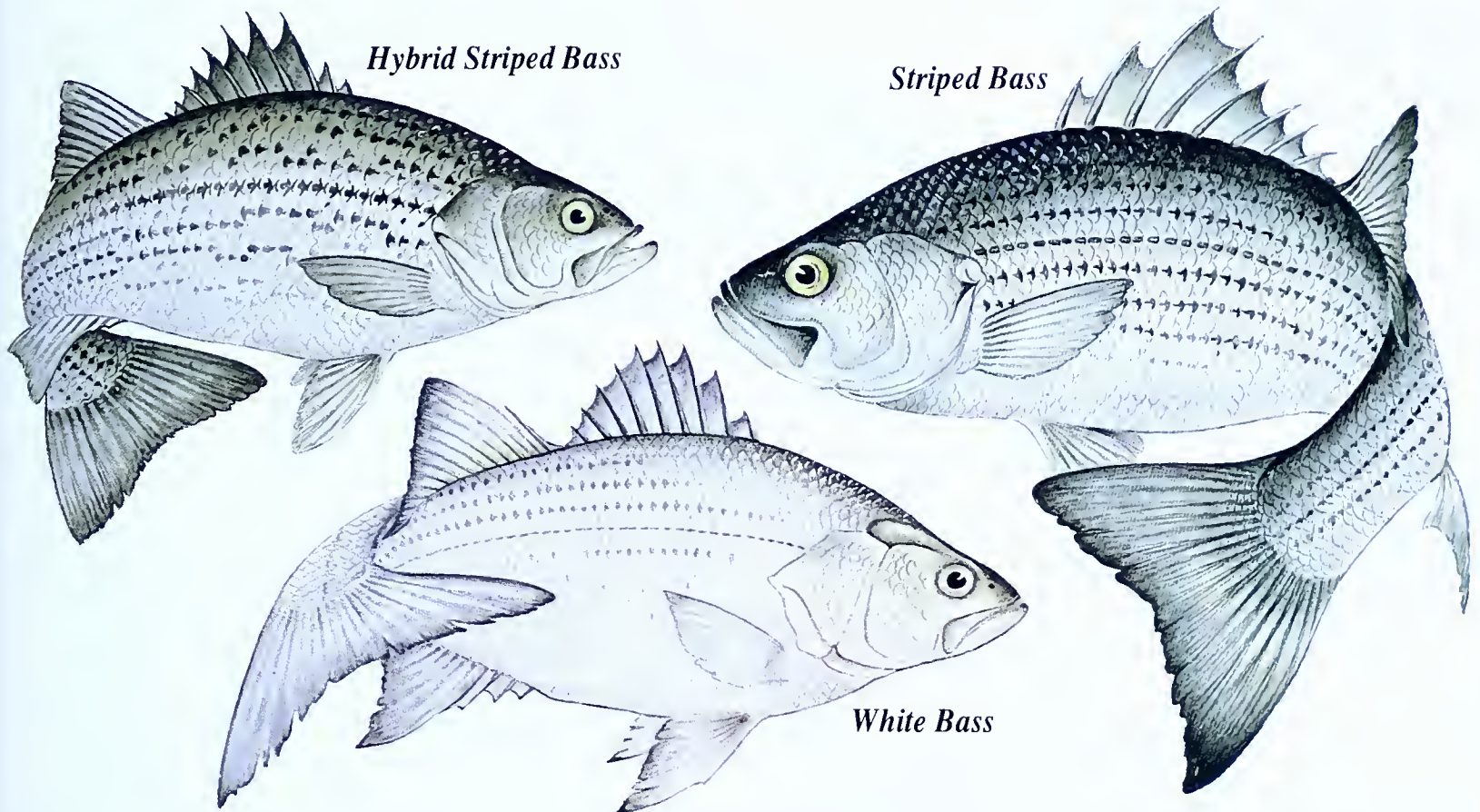
Springtime lake anglers focusing on spawning white bass concentrate their efforts at night, when the fish are most active. A fathead or shiner minnow of two or three inches suspended under a bobber is the normal presentation. This fishing usually occurs around late April and early May.

Cold-water river white bass can be caught on jigs tipped with minnows. Eighth-ounce or quarter-ounce plastic grub-bodied jigs, spiced with a small fathead minnow, do the trick. Whites also slam spoons and blade baits. Incidentally, good white bass fishing on the rivers (and tailraces) mentioned should be available right now.

Summer white bass—when they are up and feeding—can be caught on a variety of small topwater and shallow running lures. Straight-shaft spinners are also effective because you can vary the depth at which you fish these lures. They also cast well, and this can be a definite plus.

It's not likely that white bass will ever obtain the esteem of trout, bass or walleyes in the eyes of most Pennsylvania anglers. But when the glamour species let you down, and you're looking for that something different, cash in on white bass action.

WILL THE REAL WHITE BASS PLEASE STAND UP



Some of the waters harboring white bass also are stocked by the Commission with hybrid striped bass, a striped bass x white bass cross. This makes proper identification of both species important.

According to Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson, a white bass has only one tooth patch on its tongue. The black lateral stripes located above the lateral line are unbroken. Also, the fish is deeper-bodied than a hybrid.

A hybrid striped bass has two tooth patches on the tongue, though this may be difficult to distinguish on a smaller fish. The stripes located above the lateral line are broken. A hybrid striper is more streamlined than a white bass.

Lorson says not to pay attention—for identification purposes—to markings below the lateral line on either species. He also says that if a fish is over 15 inches long, examine it closely—odds are, it's a hybrid (in waters where they both exist).

Correct identification of the two species is important for two reasons. First, it's illegal to harvest a hybrid less than 15 inches long. Secondly, mistakenly removing a hybrid striper from a body of water is taking away a fish that has tremendous growth potential. They can reach five pounds or better in a few short years.—JK.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA WHITE BASS HOTSPOTS



1. Pymatuning Reservoir
2. Conneaut Lake
3. Canadohta Lake
4. Shenango Lake
5. Allegheny Reservoir (Kinzua Lake)
6. Allegheny River
7. Loyalhanna Lake tailrace
8. Crooked Creek Lake tailrace
9. Monongahela River
10. Ohio River
11. Beaver River



Cold Weather **HOT HATCHES**

by Charles R. Meck



It happened unexpectedly the second day of the trout season last year. Bryan Meck, Rick Nowaczek and I headed for a section of Bald Eagle Creek just a few miles above Julian. Before we arrived at the stream, we saw an angler running full stride back to his car.

"There's a quill gordon hatch on the stream right now," he shouted as he carelessly tossed his spinning rod in the trunk of his car and grabbed a fiberglass fly rod.

Bryan, Rick and I began tearing off Woolly Buggers and Green Weenies from our tippets and rushed to the stream. When we arrived we saw a half-dozen trout feeding not on quill gordons, but on hendricksons. All three of us hurriedly tied on Hendrickson patterns and we headed in separate directions for feeding trout.

Bryan and I headed downstream. Each pool and riffle now held tens of duns emerging and five to six rising trout. We made a few casts over each trout, caught some, missed others, and then we moved downstream to another riffle-pool section to search for more feeding trout. At each of these sections we saw up to a half-dozen rising trout. We fished a half-mile of Bald Eagle Creek during the hatch, moving from section to section to locate new trout feeding on duns.

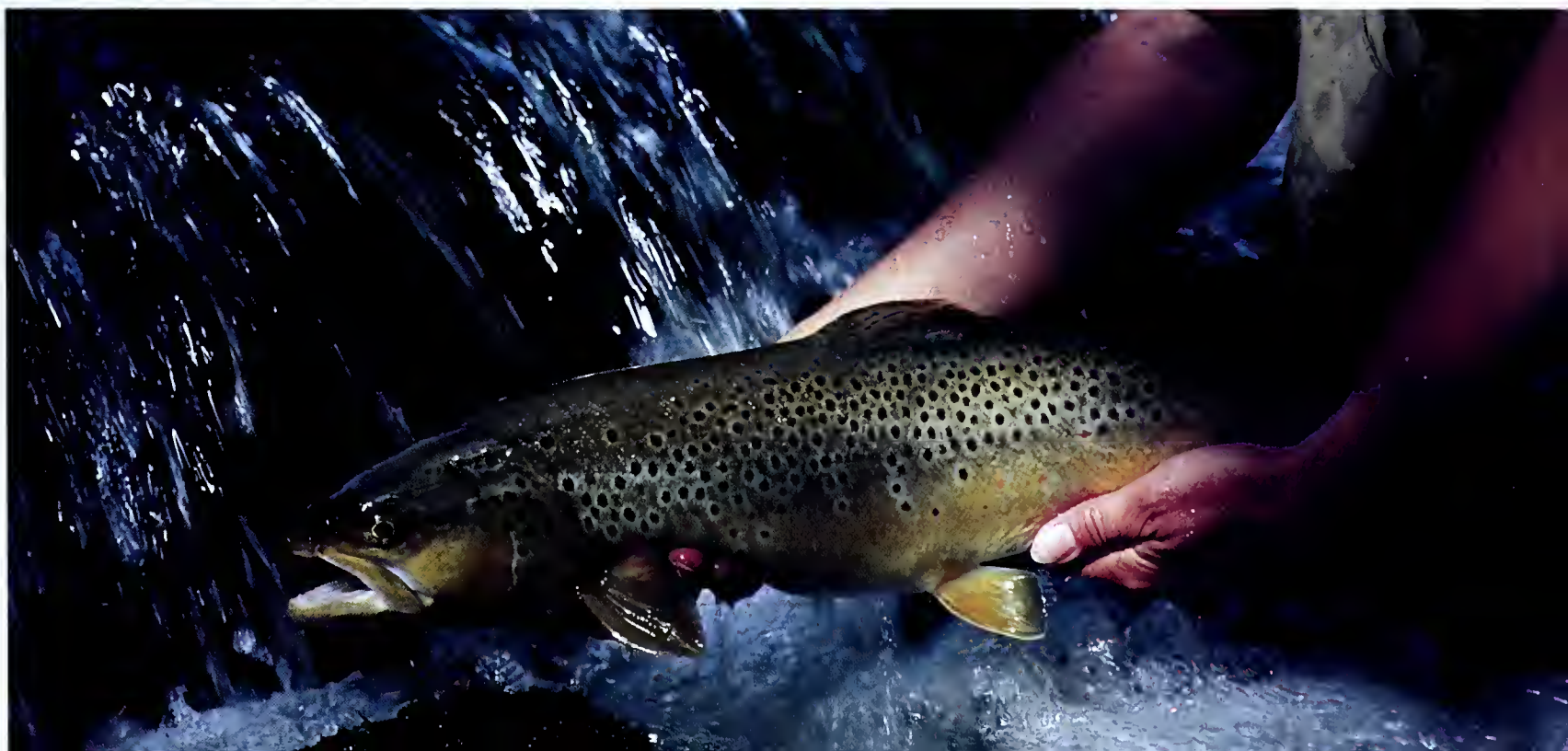
What a great day of matching the hatch in April! Is this an isolated meet-a-hatch incident in early spring? Read on.

John Chernetsky and Lee Eckert of the Wilkes-Barre area once met me at Jerry Lewis's home near Rowland on the Lackawaxen River. Two inches of snow had fallen the evening before opening day and it still covered parts of the road heading to the river. About mid-morning several heavy snow squalls laid another blanket of white on the valley. Shortly after noon, leaden skies gave way to blue and hendricksons appeared by the thousands on the Lackawaxen's surface.

I recently told a friend, Ken Rictor of Chambersburg, about these and other early season matching-the-hatch episodes I've witnessed over the years, and he was eager to see them for himself. Ken eagerly wanted to see one of those early spring hatches that I often talk about. He wanted to see trout feeding on little blue-winged olives, quill gordons, hendricksons or blue quills. I promised him that when the season opened I'd take him to a stream where he could see feeding fish in April.



*Paraleptophlebia
Adoptiva*



I didn't have long to wait. A few days after the season began, I experienced great hatches in the narrows section on Fishing Creek in Clinton County.

Ken and his wife, Kathy, had just traveled 150 miles to witness this early spring hatch on Fishing Creek. The three of us planned to be on the water shortly after noon.

Timing

Be certain on those April hatches that you arrive by noon. Hatches appear at the most comfortable time of day—when the air temperature reaches its highest point. You'll find little blue-winged olive duns and blue quills emerging as early as 10 or 11 a.m.

By early afternoon you can see great hatches of quill gordons and hendricksons on many of our Commonwealth streams. Add to these great mayfly hatches the possibility that you'll also encounter caddis flies at the same time and you can see that you can be in for a hot time of fly fishing even in April.

I selected Fishing Creek for Ken and Kathy because the trophy trout section holds a good number of trout and great early hatches. Fishing Creek holds exceptional little blue-wing olive, blue quill, quill gordon and hendrickson hatches in April. Add to this a grannom caddis fly and you can see that the chances of meeting a hatch on this prolific stream are exceptionally high even in April.

On occasion in the past I've hit early season days on Fishing Creek when I've seen four mayfly hatches in one day, and for good measure, grannom caddis flies returned to lay eggs in the afternoon.

The day the three of us selected to visit Fishing Creek turned out to be one of those early season blustery, cold, overcast days when the air temperature never rose above 50 degrees. If you hit one of those "lousy" early spring days, and the water temperature rises above 50 degrees, you might be in for a spectacular day of early dry fly fishing. When these mayflies appeared on the surface, the cold air prevented them from taking flight quickly, and they became easy prey for feeding trout.

When we arrived at the stream, we saw the surface already filled with hendrickson and blue quill naturals. Two separate pods of trout in the riffle above and another pod on the far side fed on dazed duns. All three of us quickly threw our gear together and headed for the stream and the unfolding duet of tremendous hatches. Ken took up a fishing position on the other side of the stream where we had spotted more than a dozen frenzied surface-feeding trout.

When we arrived at the stream bank, hundreds of hendricksons and blue quills continued an uninterrupted parade past us. We looked at the situation and decided that most of the trout keyed in on the hendricksons, so we all tied on a copy of the dun.

As Ken looked upstream, he saw dozens of dazed hendrickson adults, too cold to take flight, sucked in by feeding brook and

brown trout. He didn't have to cast precisely to one trout—in the area he fished, one float covered about a half-dozen trout. Although the water temperature registered 52 degrees on that cold April day, the air temperature never rose above 50 degrees. Few mayflies ever take flight in these severe circumstances.

Ken fished without moving for more than two hours that afternoon. Blue quills and hendricksons kept emerging and trout

continued feeding uninterrupted. He lost all awareness of time and spent most of the afternoon fishing over a pod of more than a dozen actively feeding trout. He hadn't moved one step in that entire episode, continuously casting over trout feeding on hendrickson naturals. He became completely mesmerized by the frenzied feeding activity in front of him.

Nymphs, not duns

Not all the trout readily took the parachute Hendrickson pattern Ken used, so we tied on one with a trailing Z-lon shuck attached. That fooled a few trout. But others fed on the emerging nymphs.

It's important to observe the rise form. Too often, when anglers see trout rising, they automatically think that trout are taking duns on the surface. Often, these rises are to emerging nymphs and not to duns.

If you don't take any trout with a good dry fly imitation, use a dun pattern with a shuck attached. This latter artificial suggests to a trout that the dun is still breaking out of its nymphal skin, and it is more vulnerable than a dun on the surface.

If you don't have any dry flies with shucks tied in, you can attach one to a regular dry fly. I cut an old nylon stocking crosswise into narrow strips. Pull them and the strip curls. I color these shucks with a permanent-ink marker the color of the body of the nymph.

If the shuck doesn't work, then go to an emerger pattern. For the hendrickson, I tie a body of tan spun fur, a tail and throat of partridge, and a loop of poly yarn on top of the thorax.

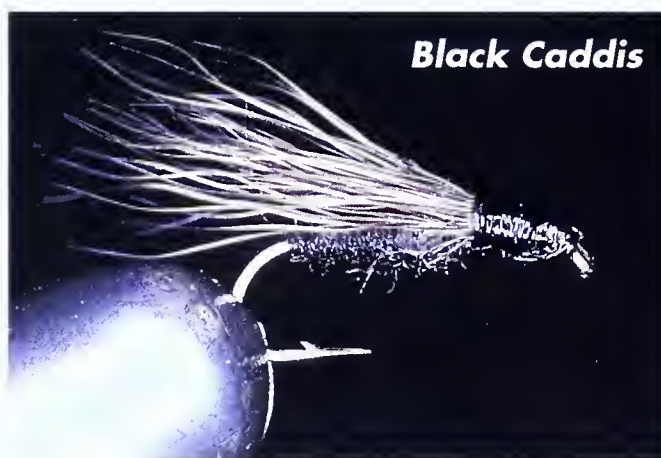
If the emerger doesn't produce the number of trout I think it should, then

I tie on a parachute dry fly and attach a 20-inch to 30-inch tip-pet at the bend of the hook. To the tippet I add a weighted nymph or emerger. Adding weight keeps the pattern under the surface. By attaching the nymph to the dry fly, you keep the wet fly off the bottom, continuously moving toward the surface as the natural does.

Ken caught a few of the rising trout with a Hendrickson with a shuck attached. For more than two hours the parade of dazed hendrickson and blue quill naturals continued unabated by the cold April winds.

Caddises

Remember that you can also expect to see grannom caddis flies in April. Several Pennsylvania streams also boast a good early season tan caddis hatch, and Pine Creek (around Waterville) has one of these late-April-early-May cream caddises. If you



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find a stream that holds any of these hatches, you're in for some exciting fishing—if you're patient.

I remember the grannom hatch Jack Busch of Erie and I hit on northwestern Pennsylvania's Sugar Creek the third week in April. Just about every bush along the stream held a number of these dark caddis flies. Throughout the day, even more emerged from the surface. We took a few trout, but Jack urged me to be patient until the afternoon when more might emerge, and some already on branches might return to the surface to lay eggs.

About 2 p.m. it happened. Every trout in the 100-yard stretch of this freestone stream became active and fed on returning caddis flies. In one pool I took six trout and missed a half-dozen more. The action lasted for more than an hour, and each pool gave up some of its holdover trout to the grannom pattern.

Take black-bodied downwings in sizes 10 to 16 to copy these grannom species. The Penns Creek variety can be copied with a size 10. The ones found on the Little Juniata River, Sugar Creek, Spruce Creek and Fishing Creek can be copied with a size 16 downwing.

Both Codorus Creek near Hanover in York County and Yellow Breeches Creek in Cumberland County hold great early season tan caddis fly hatches. Some anglers boast of great early season fly fishing on these two streams with a size 14 pattern.

Take some patterns along that copy the emerging pupa. If you don't have any wet flies with you when you hit the downwing hatch and you think they're underneath, then purposely pull the dry pattern underwater and twitch it.

The trout you try to catch in April differ in a number of ways from fish you'll catch later in the season. First, you're more likely to hit cold weather and uncooperative trout in spring. I remember the first time I hit the hendrickson hatch on the Lackawanna River in 1980. By 2 p.m., thousands upon thousands of duns rested on the water. Because the air temperature never rose above 40 degrees, the insects never took flight and died on the surface. But with all these hendricksons on the surface, I saw no more than three fish rise in two hours.

Often you'll experience great hatches early in the season and few trout feeding on them. Cold water temperatures in April can slow the feeding rate of trout. If you witness a good hatch and don't see any trout rising in a particular section, move to another area and look for rising trout there. If trout aren't feeding on the surface, go underwater with an emerger or nymph pattern.

Timing

You expect to fish over most hatches in late May and June in the evening. Often at that time some of the best hatches appear during the last half-hour before total darkness. Not so in April. Most aquatic insects emerge and lay eggs between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. The best hendrickson, quill gordon, little blue-winged olive and blue quill hatches often occur from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

If you plan to fish these early hatches, timing your trip to the stream can make the difference between an unsuccessful trip and a highly productive one. I've already hit heavy, productive hendrickson hatches in late afternoon and quit as soon as the hatch subsided. An hour or two later, I've seen anglers hitting the same water that just an hour before held dozens of feeding fish—now completely void of any sign of what had happened earlier.

Would you like to hit one of these hot hatches in April? Just follow a few simple rules and you can have an early start to your matching-the-hatch season.

- Fish on a stream that you know holds one of the early season hatches.

- Fish in the late morning and afternoon.

- If the hatch appears and you don't see any feeding trout, move to another stream section. If you see no action there, then go underneath with a nymph or emerger pattern.

- Be prepared with patterns and sizes for the following: hendrickson (14 and 16), quill gordon (14), blue quill (18), little bluewing (20), grannom (10 to 16), black quill (14), tan caddis (14) and cream caddis (14).

If you follow these simple rules, you can find some hot hatches in cool weather.



38 Pennsylvania Streams with April Hatches

1. Little Pine Creek
2. Fishing Creek (Clinton County)
3. Kettle Creek
4. Cedar Run
5. Slate Run
6. Loyalsock Creek
7. Lycoming Creek
8. Bowman Creek
9. Allegheny River
10. Pine Creek
11. Caldwell Creek
12. Bald Eagle Creek (Tyrone)
13. Bald Eagle Creek (Julian)
14. Lehigh River
15. Little Lehigh
16. Stony Fork Creek
17. Lackawaxen River
18. Delaware River
19. Dyberry Creek
20. Brodhead Creek
21. Big Bushkill Creek
22. Tobyhanna Creek
23. Young Womans Creek
24. Ninemile Run
25. Cross Fork Creek
26. Oswayo Creek
27. First Fork of the Sinnemahoning
28. White Deer Creek
29. Codorus Creek
30. Yellow Creek
31. Oil Creek
32. Thompson Creek
33. Little Sandy Creek
34. Falling Springs
35. Larry Creek
36. Grays Run
37. Yellow Breeches
38. Genesee Forks

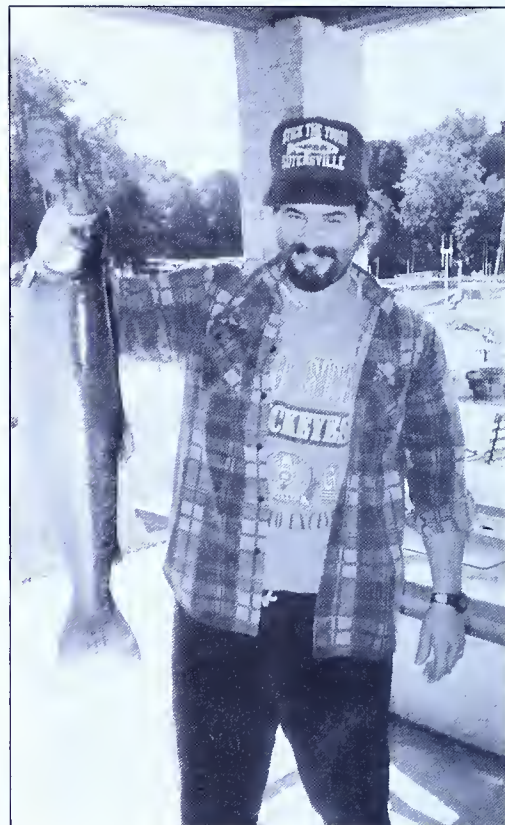
Cast and Caught



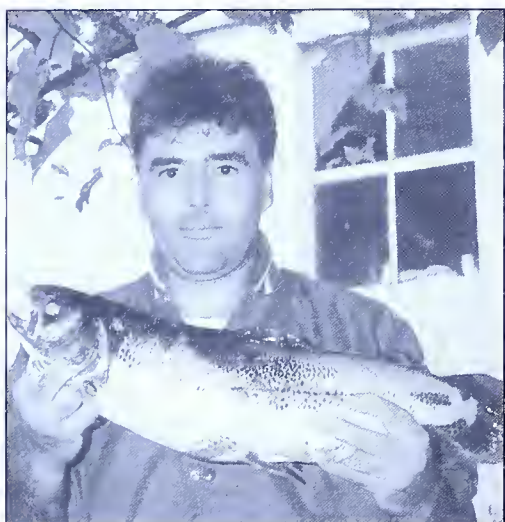
Chris Stuckwisch, of Ambridge, caught this nice brown trout on a spinner. The six-pound, three-ounce fish measured 23 inches and was caught out of Walnut Creek in Erie County.



This nice steelhead trout was caught by Richard Dittman, of Gibsonia. The trout, taken from Walnut Creek, weighed nine pounds and was 29 inches long.



McKeesport resident Tim Malego caught this hefty steelhead trout out of Lake Erie. The fish, fooled with a spoon, weighed 10 pounds, 10 ounces and was 29 inches long. Nice going, Tim!



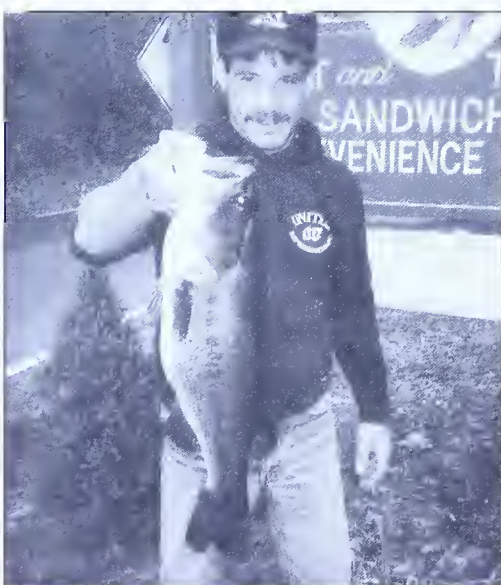
Carlos DeCeia, of Bethlehem, was fishing Saucon Creek in Northampton County when this nice rainbow trout grabbed his lure. The fish was 21 inches long and weighed five pounds.



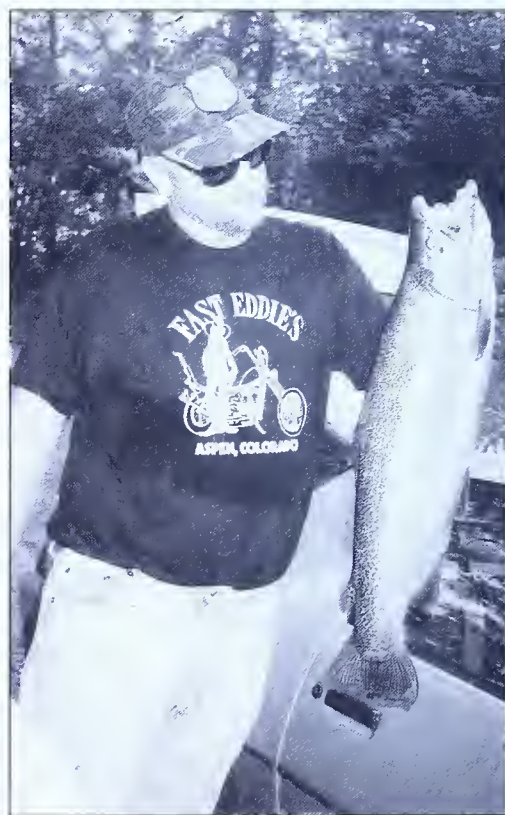
Huntingdon resident Mike Chislock used a waxworm to convince this nice steelhead to bite. The Elk Creek fish weighed nine pounds, one ounce and was 28 inches long.



Northampton resident Barry Fisher was fishing in Beltzville Lake when this hefty brown trout grabbed his bait. The 27 1/2-inch fish weighed seven pounds, three ounces.



Michael Mastripolito, of Exton, used a jig-and-pig combo to fool this large-mouth bass. The Marsh Creek Lake fish was 22 inches long and weighed six pounds, three ounces.



Mike DeCoursey, of Allison Park, caught this nice steelhead last October. The fish, taken out of Elk Creek, Erie County, weighed 12 pounds and measured 32 inches in length.

Cast and Caught



Darren Ryland used a maggot to convince this steelhead trout to bite. He was fishing Lake Erie when the 8 1/2-pound steelhead took his bait. The fish, which measured 31 inches, earned the Mercer resident a Senior Angler's Award.



Eight-year-old Abby Lanchman, of York, shows off one of several bluegills she caught while on a fishing trip last summer. She also caught and released several bass. Nice going, Abby!



Raymond Blakely, Sr., of New Kensington, qualified for a Senior Angler's Award with this four-pound, eight-ounce smallmouth bass. He was fishing the Allegheny River in Armstrong County when the 21-inch fish grabbed his spinnerbait.



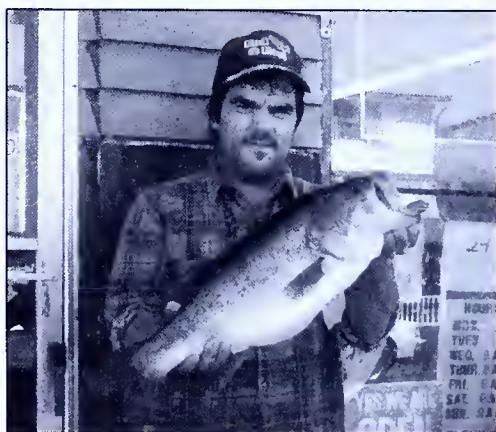
Dillsburg resident Arthur Laner, Jr., was fishing Raystown Lake when this nice striped bass took his bait. The fish weighed 20.54 pounds and was 36 1/4 inches long. Nice striper, Art!



Saegertown resident Bob Fleury was fishing Edinboro Lake last September when he caught this nice largemouth bass. The 6 1/2-pound, 21-inch fish was caught on a spinner.



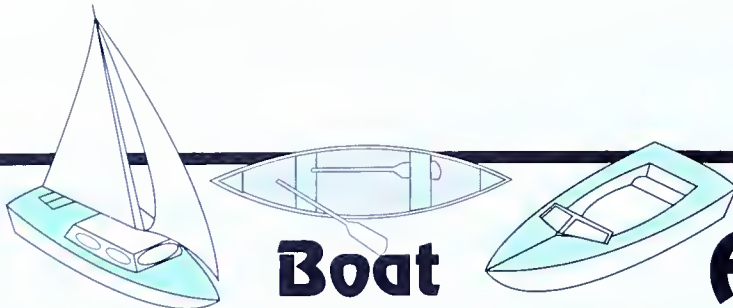
Frank Bauregger, of Erie, caught this big brown trout in Elk Creek in Erie County. The fish weighed eight pounds, four ounces and measured 28 inches long.



Lawrence Conley, Jr., of Levittown, shows off the eight-pound, two-ounce largemouth bass he caught while fishing Levittown Lake. The 24-inch fish was fooled with a jig-n'-pig.



Chris Boyer, of Honey Grove, caught this palomino trout on the first day of the 1992 trout season. The Licking Creek fish was 24 1/2 inches long and weighed six pounds. Great job, Chris!



Boat

AUCTION

On Saturday, April 10, 1993, the Fish & Boat Commission will hold an auction of used boats, motors, trailers and boating accessories at the Huntsdale Fish Culture Station, 195 Lebo Road, Carlisle, Cumberland County. A preview of the sale items will be held from 10 a.m. to noon. The auction begins at noon, and it will take place rain or shine.

The terms of sale include full payment in cash or by personal check. No credit cards will be accepted. There is a 10 percent buyer's premium for all sales, and six percent sales tax will be collected. All sales are final.

To receive a list of the items to be auctioned, please send a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Boat Auction, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Bureau of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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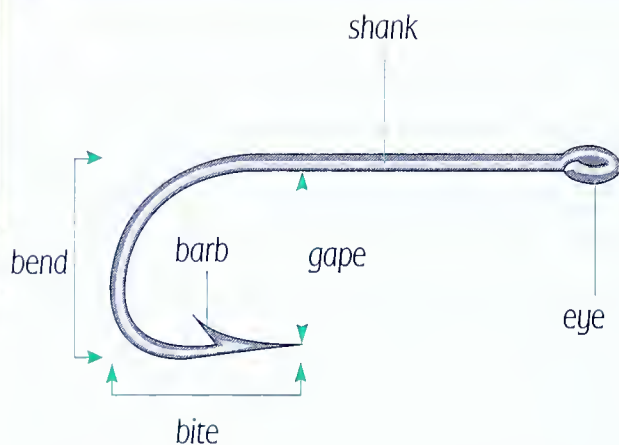
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Angler's Notebook *by Sam Everett*



Hooks have six features that determine how useful they are in various kinds of fishing.

Have you ever wondered why trout strike your leader knots and not your fly? The knots resemble a favorite trout food—water fleas, or daphnia.

Are you a “dress-for-success” angler? White and yellow clothing reflects light, which lets fish see you easily. Colors like buff, tan, blue and green absorb light, which makes you less visible to fish.

Vibrations in the water and on the surface attract gamefish. That's why lures that make vibrations and noises are effective.

A fishing rod has two purposes. First, it lets you present a lure or bait in a natural manner. Second, the spring built in to a rod lets you tire a hooked fish without the fish straining you or the line and terminal tackle. When you play a fish, make the fish fight the angle of the rod—don't “horse” the fish in. A rod's bend, fishing with “an angle,” is the original of the term *angler*.

After you catch a fish with a dry fly, the fly will likely be matted with slime. Swirl the fly in the water to clean it, and then apply floatant.

Wet flies and dries in sizes 10 and 12 are good panfish offerings. Try a Black Gnat, White Miller and a Coachman.

Wear boots that fit. Boots that are too large are clumsy and heavy. The world's most agile angler won't be able to keep his footing if he's hampered by boots that are a size or two too large. Boots that are too small cramp and tire the feet and legs.

A large bait, suspended on a bobber far enough to keep it just off the bottom or out of weeds, is a good rig for bass, pike and pickerel. The bobber also lets the bait move with the current and it instantly signals a strike. Use a bobber just big enough to hold the bait at the right depth and to be seen easily by the angler.

A Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear and a Coachman nymph are excellent imitations of mayfly nymphs.

A boulder with its top jutting above a stream or river's surface is a prime fish-holding place. Food carried by the water collects in places where big rocks break the current flow. From these areas of quiet water, gamefish can easily dart out into the current to take food.

Swivels help prevent line twist with many kinds of lures. If you think the swivel interferes with the action of a lure, or if you think the fish pass up your offering because you added a swivel, try this: Tie the swivel to the end of your line, but add an 18-inch to 24-inch section of monofilament leader and tie your lure directly to the leader.

On the Water

with Dave Wolf

Before April's Magical Day

I shove the canoe into the gentle flow. I have already loaded the two rods, vest, lunch and extra boxes of flies. I don my PFD and climb into the craft.

There is a chill in the air, but a bright warming sun takes the edge off the cold and makes the river quite pleasant. There is only a slight wind—one that helps the canoe track nicely downstream, requiring only the occasional dip of the paddle to keep a straight course.

No one is on the river; it is a week-day and taking time off from work to be here adds to my pleasure. Rings of rising trout become visible before I round the first bend, not 50 yards from my launch site. I work line off the reel and the polished nickel-steel guides take the line as smoothly as a well-oiled machine. The fly cocks on the stiff hackles that I had been fortunate to find at an out-of-the-way tackle shop. Offered at a bargain basement price, it was the best neck I have purchased in years—a blue dun with a sheen to the fibers and stiff enough to carry size 12 hooks without flotant. The cast, 60 feet beneath an overhanging branch and exactly three feet above the trout, was as good as I can make.

The trout rose confidently and inhaled the fly. At the setting of the hook I felt his weight. Then, as if I had not been assured, he leaped above the water, spraying droplets that caught the warming sun's rays. It could have been a painting—it should have been a painting. The trout ran for the far bank and the reel sang its sweet song, only performed when line was peeled from it. The white dacron backing came to follow the lime-green fly line into the flow. The fish leaped again, now 60 to 70 yards away. Its size mesmerized me and I almost forgot to begin reeling when it turned downstream toward the canoe. But the hook was set well and when I reeled in the slack line we were still connected.

A trout below you is not good; it is no longer fighting the current—you are. Fighting the current and such a large trout often ends in the hook pulling loose or the tippet parting, but today was my day and I held the rod with one hand and pushed the paddle into the flow with the other. To my surprise, the great fish turned and headed upstream, the line slicing the water like butter as it passed the canoe. The trout headed for a deep pool with unknown bottom structure and I became concerned that rocks, logs or boulders may be there ready to fray my fine tippet.

My fear was unfounded, however, and the deeper water upstream was my advantage. There the large trout floundered, fighting both the current and the steady pressure I exerted on it. I regained the white dacron backing and then began layering the green fly line back onto the reel. The battle was not over yet. I have lost too many fish at this point of the fight to



become overconfident. The leader could have abrasions and thus be weakened. The fly could have worked back and forth in the great fish's jaw and could simply fall out if I allowed any slack in the line.

I could see the giant brown roll on the surface, a trout larger than any I had taken to date. Its tail was as wide as my hand was long, its brilliant red spots, copper-colored body, orange belly and red adipose fin indicating a wild trout.

My adrenaline was rushing. I had no intention of taking the trout, but a quick photograph would be nice, so I readied my camera. To touch the fish would be enough, to simply complete the battle and twist the hook free, allowing it to swim into the crystal-clear waters and fade from view.

The fish was close now, splashing wildly on the surface, spraying me with water as the canoe teetered when I leaned to reach for it. I remember touching the trout's cold body as I slid my hand beneath its stomach in hopes of calming it long enough for one photograph. The fish was larger than I expected, much larger than any I had taken before. All previous fish paled in comparison to the giant now held in the palm of my hand just below the water's surface. The large trout was calm, as if knowing I would soon set it free. I turned and reached for my camera, my mind's eye would dim in time, the photograph I hoped would not.

There was an annoying buzzing sound in the background. An alarm with red-illuminated digital numbers. I slapped wildly at the snooze alarm, gathered my feet beneath me and stumbled to the kitchen to make fresh coffee. I held the warm cup in my hands and gazed out the window. A cold rain fell on the freshly thawed land. It was still March, and trout season was closed. As I got ready for work, I wondered how many more dreams like this I could endure before that magical day in April when trout season opened and I could try to fulfill at least one dream. And I could not help but wonder why of all the dreams I have had, of all that I have fulfilled, those I recall the most are surrounded by free-flowing streams and creatures we call fish.



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